

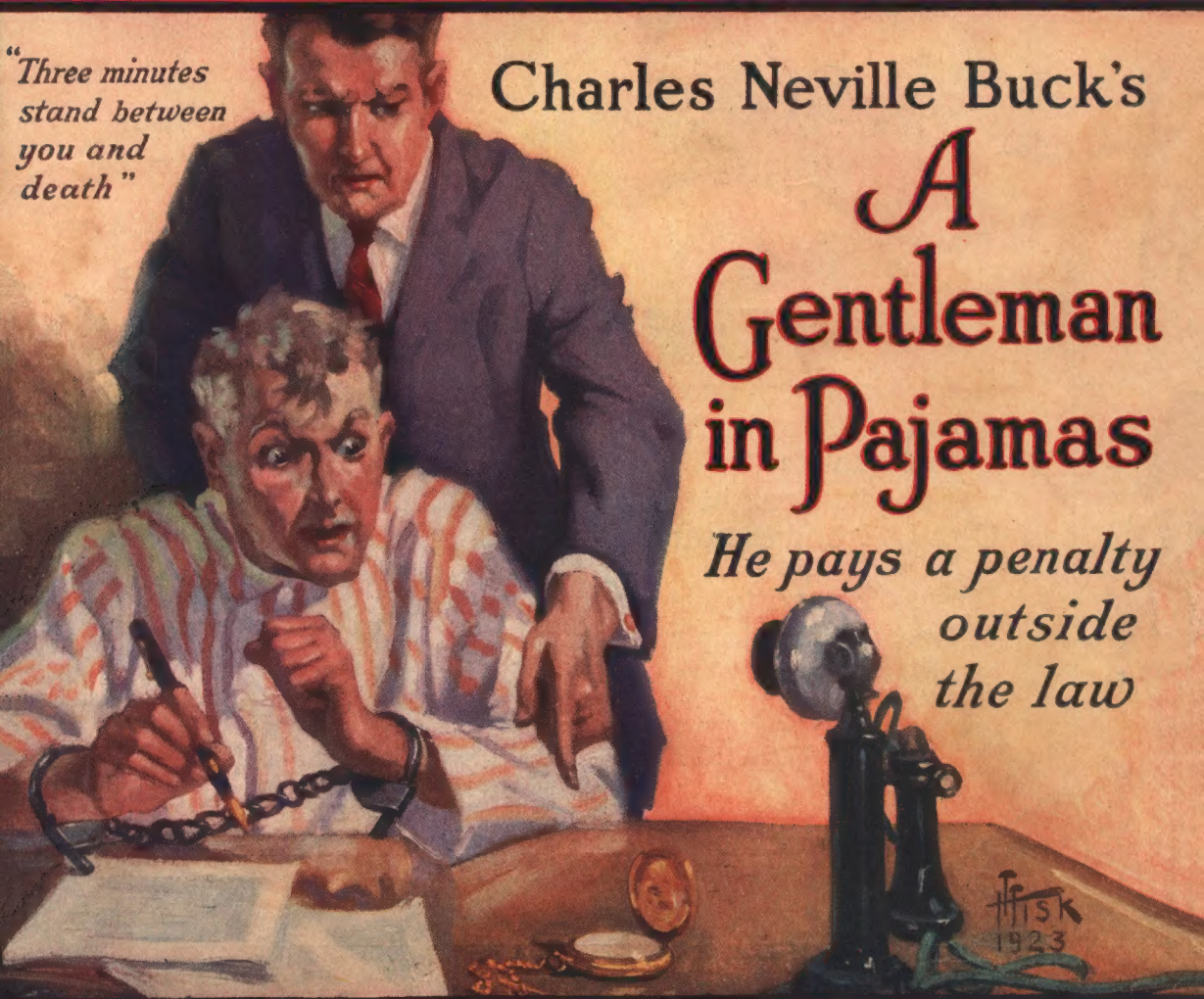
ARGOSY ALL-STORY WEEKLY

*"Three minutes
stand between
you and
death"*

Charles Neville Buck's

A Gentleman in Pajamas

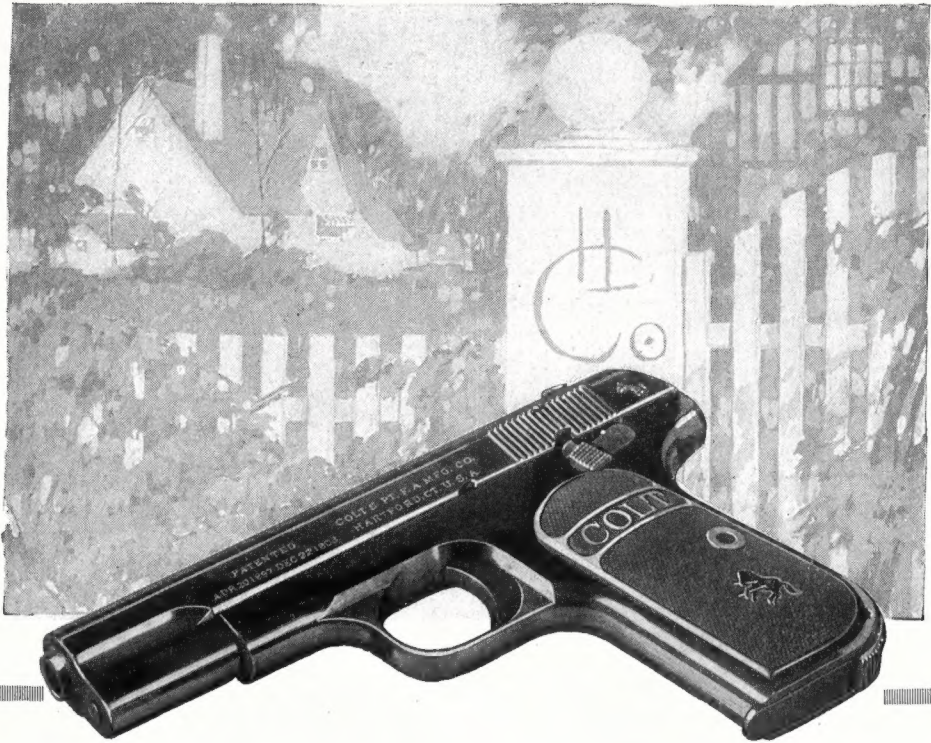
*He pays a penalty
outside
the law*



10¢ PER
COPY

JUNE 16

BY THE
YEAR \$4.00



The Warning on the Gate Post

LAW breakers used such symbols as these to give information to each other. Here the warning is unmistakable: "This home is protected with a Colt—it shoots straight—keep away." Note the letters C-O-L-T and the target hit in the center.

Homes known to be protected with a Colt revolver or Colt automatic pistol are given a wide berth by law breakers.

COLT'S

Send for interesting booklet, "The Romance of a Colt"

COLT'S PATENT FIRE ARMS MFG. CO.

Hartford, Connecticut, U. S. A.

Pacific Coast Representative: Phil. B. Bekeart Co.
717 Market Street, San Francisco, Calif.

THE ARM OF LAW AND ORDER



\$2500 Reward!

For the Capture of An Unknown Man

Twice he had entered the St. Clair Mansion. What was he after? Who? What was in danger?

Berteau, the famous detective, had warned St. Clair that the *mysterious marauder would come again*. And now—a noise in the passage! The creak of an opening door. A shot in the dark! A capture!

Is this wounded stranger the mysterious intruder? Who could tell? Yet Berteau identified the man without hesitation and won the \$2500 reward.

How did he do it? Easy enough for the Finger Print Expert. He is the specialist, the leader, the *cream* of detectives. Every day's paper tells their wonderful exploits in solving mysterious crimes and convicting dangerous criminals.

Course in Secret Service

For a limited time we are making a special offer of a *Professional Finger Print Outfit, absolutely Free, and Free Course in Secret Service Intelligence*. Mastery of these two kindred professions will open a brilliant career for you.

Write quickly for fully illustrated free book on Finger Prints which explains this wonderful training in detail. Don't wait until this offer has expired—mail the coupon now. You may never see this announcement again! You assume no obligation—you have everything to gain and nothing to lose. Write at once—address

University of Applied Science

Dept. A-945 1920 Sunnyside Ave., Chicago, Illinois

More Trained Men Needed

The demand for trained men by governments, states, cities, detective agencies, corporations, and private bureaus is becoming greater every day. Here is a real opportunity for YOU. Can you imagine a more fascinating line of work than this? Often life and death depend upon finger print evidence—and big rewards go to the expert. Many experts can earn regularly from \$3,000 to \$10,000 per year.

Learn at Home in Spare Time

And now you can learn the secrets of this science at home in your spare time. Any man with common school education and average ability can become a Finger Print Detective in a surprisingly short time.

FREE

UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCE

Dept. A-945—1920 Sunnyside Ave., Chicago, Illinois

Gentlemen:—Without any obligation whatever, send me your new, fully illustrated, FREE book on Finger Prints and your offer of a FREE course in Secret Service Intelligence and the Free Professional Finger Print Outfit.

Name.....

Street Address.....

City and State.....

ARGOSY-ALLSTORY W E E K L Y

VOL. CLII

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NUMBER 2

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BUT one hope, one determination, lived in John Farnsworth when he emerged from twenty years in prison. This was that his son should not do what he had done. It was this, and only this, that kept him alive. There were obstacles in the course he was resolved to follow; one, a woman. The story of that unswerving purpose and the result will be told in

CHEERO, INC. By Jack Bechdolt

A FOUR-PART SERIAL WHICH WILL BEGIN NEXT WEEK.

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, and TEMPLE HOUSE, TEMPLE AVENUE, E. C., LONDON

FRANK A. MUNSEY, President

RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary

CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer

Single copies, 10 cents. By the year, \$4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; \$6.00 to Canada, and \$7.00 to Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered

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Distinguished

possessions of the man
whose dress preferences are
definite and discerning

KUM-A-PART
PRODUCTS

*Write for Correct Dress Chart &
The Baer & Wilde Co
ATTLEBORO-MASSACHUSETTS
EXCLUSIVE OWNER OF THE REG-
ISTERED TRADE MARK KUM-A-
PART WHICH IS DIE-STAMPED
ON EVERY PRODUCT FOR THE
PROTECTION OF PURCHASERS*

The Kuff Button
clicks open-snaps shut
UP TO \$25 THE PAIR

The Belt Buckle
snaps-and cant slip
UP TO \$20.00



Classified Advertising

The Purpose of this Department is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needs for the home, office, farm, or person; to offer, or seek, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

Classified Advertising Rates in The Munsey Magazines:

	LINE RATE	Combi- nation line rate
Munsey's Magazine	\$1.60	\$4.00
Argosy-Allstory	2.50	less 2 per cent cash discount.
Weekly		
Minimum space four lines.		

July 21st Argosy-Allstory Forms Close June 23rd.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

\$13.45 FOR A STYLISH MADE-TO-YOUR-MEASURE 3-PIECE SUIT—regular \$25.00 value. We are making this bargain offer to prove our remarkable values in tailoring. Write for our big sample outfit showing how agents make \$35.00 to \$40.00 extra every week taking orders for high-grade tailoring. **WASHINGTON TAILORING CO., Dept. T-304, Chicago.**

LARGE SHIRT MANUFACTURER wants Agents to sell complete line of shirts direct to wearer. Exclusive patterns. Big values. Free samples. **MADISON MILLS, 503 Broadway, New York.**

AGENTS—\$15 A DAY—EASY, QUICK SALES—FREE AUTO—BIG WEEKLY BONUS—\$1.50 premium Free to every customer. Simply show our Beautiful, 7 piece, Solid Aluminum Handle Cutlery Set. Appeals instantly. We deliver and collect. Pay daily. **NEW ERA MFG. CO., 803 Madison St., Dept. A-20, Chicago.**

Wonderful Seller. Big Profits. Harper's Ten Use Cleaning Set washes and dries windows, scrub, mops, cleans walls, sweeps, etc. Complete set costs less than brooms. Can start without investing a cent. Write Harper Brush Works, 107 A St., Fairfield, Iowa.

TAILORING AGENTS: Our \$29.50 All Wool tailored to order suits and overcoats are \$20 cheaper than store prices. Commissions paid in advance. Protected territory. Beautiful assortment. 6x9 swatches free. **J. B. SIMPSON, Dept. 591, 831 Adams St., Chicago.**

AGENTS: \$8 to \$16 a day. Brand new cutlery set. You display and sell. Fifty Dollars weekly easily made. B. & G. RUBBER COMPANY, Dept. 296, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

GREATEST SENSATION! ELEVEN PIECE toilet article set selling like blazes at \$1.75 while \$1.00 dressmakers charge free to each customer. Spring rush on. **FOSTER REID CO., 90 Winslow Bldg., Station C, Chicago.**

PORTRAIT AGENTS: Our goods will make you big profits. Delivery guaranteed. Rejects credited. Prompt shipments. Send for latest catalog and prices. **ADAM J. KROLL & CO., 600 Blue Island Ave., Chicago, Ill.**

THIS IS IT—FIFTY FAST SELLERS. Everybody needs and buys. Fifty Dollars weekly easily made. **B. & G. RUBBER COMPANY, Dept. 296, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.**

AGENTS—CLEAN UP \$100 WEEKLY WITH "NIFTY NINE", weekly average 100 sales—dollar profit each. 30-40 sales daily frequently made; demonstrating outfit cinches order. 30 other coin-coaxers, all daily necessities. Postal brings our unique plans. **DAVIS PRODUCTS COMPANY, Dept. 58, Chicago.**

AGENTS: \$75.00—\$100.00 weekly taking orders for popular price-smashing raincoats, \$3.98. Largest commission advanced. Prompt shipment. We collect. Free coats. **EAGLE RAINCOAT CO., 532 Mid-City Bank Building, Chicago.**

AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

MAKE MONEY WRITING. SHORT STORIES IN DEMAND. Your manuscripts revised, edited, typed and sold on commission, by Authors' Agent. Write for terms. Twenty years experience. **F. C. HILL, Suite AA, 150 Nassau Street, New York.**

STORIES, POEMS, PLAYS, ETC., ARE WANTED for publication. Good ideas bring big money. Submit Mss., or write **LITERARY BUREAU, 110, Hannibal, Mo.**

FREE TO WRITERS—a wonderful little book of money making hints, suggestions, ideas; the A B C of successful Story and Movie-Play writing. Absolutely free. Send for your copy now! Just address Authors' Press, Dept. 19, Auburn, N. Y.

SEND ME YOUR SHORT STORIES AND PHOTOPLAY PLOTS. Submit in any form. I'll Revise. Typewrite and place on the Market. Send manuscript or write **H. L. HURSH, Dept. 4, 210 Munch St., Harrisburg, Pa.**

MOTION PICTURE PLAYS

EXCHANGE PLOTS FOR \$5—Photoplay Ideas accepted any form; revised, typed, published, copyrighted. Sold. Advice free. **UNIVERSAL SCENARIO CORP., 918 Western Mutual Life Bldg., Los Angeles.**

MICHIGAN FARM LANDS FOR SALE

GOOD FARM LANDS! Near bustling city in lower Mich.: 20, 40, 80 ac. tracts; only \$10 to \$50 down; bal. long time. Write today for free illustrated booklet. **SWIGART LAND CO., Y-1245 First Nat'l Bank Bldg., Chicago.**

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

TAILORING SALESMEN WANTED To take orders for all-wool suits and overcoats to retail at \$24.50; \$5.00 profit on each order. Fit and workmanship absolutely guaranteed. This is an opportunity for live wire salesmen and merchants to earn the largest profits. Write today for our large and attractive Fall & Winter swatch-line. 250 all-wool samples. **JAY ROSE & CO., Dept. A, 411 S. Wells St., Chicago.**

SIDE LINE SALESMEN! You never miss a town with our new "big six combination" advertising specialties—Sell everywhere, every day, every business. Sensational proposition. Pocket samples. **NATIONAL ART NOVELTY CO., Dept. A, Chicago.**

WORLD'S FASTEST AGENT'S SELLER. 300% profit. Needed in every home and store. Establish permanent business. **PREMIER MFG. CO., Box 806-S, Detroit, Mich.**

ORANGEADE in Powder—just add cold water—most delicious drink you ever tasted. Fine for home, parties, picnics, dances, etc. Send dime for ten glass pkgs., or 50c for 7 kinds (70 big glassfuls) Cherry, Grape, Strawberry, etc., postpaid with particulars how to make **Big Money.** **CHAS. MORRISSEY CO., 4417-29 Madison St., Chicago, Ill.**

Why Not Sell Us Your Spare Time? \$1.00 per hour. \$9.85 Daily easy for full time—introducing New Style Guaranteed Hosiery—37 styles, 17 colors—No capital or experience required. Just write orders. We deliver and collect. Your pay daily, also monthly bonus. Free auto offer besides. Complete outfit furnished. All colors—grades including silks. **MAC-O-CHEE MILLS CO., Desk 27011, Cincinnati, Ohio.**

RUMMAGE SALES MAKE \$50.00 DAILY. We start you. Representatives wanted everywhere. "Wholesale Distributors," Dept. 26, 609 Division Street, Chicago.

WE START YOU in business, furnishing everything. Men and women, \$30.00 to \$100.00 weekly operating our "New System Specialty Candy Factories" anywhere. Opportunity lifetime; booklet free. **W. Hillyer Ragsdale, Drawer 93, East Orange, N. J.**

TAILORING SALESMEN—fastest selling line, suits, made to measure—\$29.50—one price, all wool. Profits in advance. Biggest old reliable house. **W. D. SMITH CO., established 1895, Dept. 21, Chicago.**

BIG MONEY AND FAST SALES. EVERY OWNER BUYS GOLD INITIALS for his auto. You charge \$1.50, make \$1.35. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples. **American Monogram Co., Dept. 54, East Orange, N. J.**

27,000 RECORDS GUARANTEED WITH ONE EVERPLAY PHONOGRAPH NEEDLE; new, different, cannot injure records; \$10.00 daily easy. Free sample to workers. **EVERPLAY, Desk 612, McClurg Bldg., Chicago.**

AUTOMOBILES

AUTOMOBILE OWNERS, GARAGEMEN, MECHANICS, send today for free copy America's most popular motor magazine. Contains helpful articles on overhauling, repairing, ignition, carburetors, batteries, etc. **AUTOMOBILE DIGEST, 500 Butler Bldg., Cincinnati.**

Automobile Parts, all cars and trucks, motor parts, clutch parts, universal joints, axle shafts, gears, ball, roller, thrust bearings, timing chains. State make, model and parts wanted. Special prices. All new parts. In stock. **MERRIN MOTOR PARTS CO., 1726 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.**

AUTOMOBILE SCHOOLS

EARN MORE MONEY by learning the auto business at the Pioneer Auto School, 20 years in business. Plenty of good jobs now open. Big catalog free. **CLEVELAND AUTO SCHOOL, 1819 East 24th St., Cleveland, Ohio.**

AUTOMOBILES AND ACCESSORIES

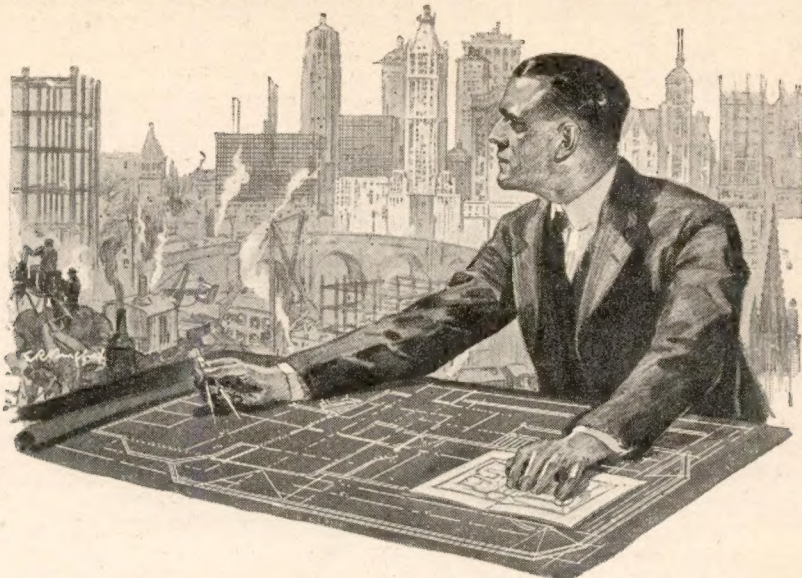
USE INSYDE TYRES in your old casings and get from 3 to 5 thousand miles more service. Positively prevent punctures and blowouts. Used over and over again. Low priced. Big Money Saver. Agents wanted. Write for terms. **AMERICAN ACCESSORIES CO., B-701, Cincinnati, Ohio.**

AUTOMOBILE TIRES

NEW INNER TUBE FREE WITH EACH slightly used tire ordered. 30x3, 30x3½, 32x3½, \$4.00. All 4 inch tires \$5.00. All 1½ and 5 inch tires \$3.50. C. O. D., no deposit required. National Tire Jobbers, 2767 Madison, Chicago.

Classified Advertising continued on page 6.

BUILDING TRADES NEED TRAINED MEN!



Thousands of good positions at good salaries

THE business tide has turned! And the building trades are leading the way back to prosperity! Government experts estimate that more than four billion dollars will be spent for construction this year.

"It will take us 12 years, working 25 per cent above normal," says John Ihlder, Manager of the Civic Development Department of the United States Chamber of Commerce, "to provide as adequately for our population as before the war."

Today the most vital need of this great building program is men—trained men—men who can step right in and do the skilled work that building construction requires.

There is a simple, easy, fascinating way by which you can prepare for a good position, at a good salary. You can do it right at home, in spare time, no matter where you live, through the International Correspondence Schools.

There is no question—no doubt about this. For 31 years the I. C. S. has been training men for advancement in the building trades and in many other business and technical subjects.

A recent investigation of 13,298 students enrolled in I. C. S. Building Trades Courses showed that 1291 had become Architects; 246 had become Designers; 494 had become Chief Draftsmen; 2827 had become Draftsmen; 1845 had become Contractors; 211 had become Assistant Foremen; 4030 had become Foremen; 2354 had become Superintendents.

IN every instance these students reported salaries or independent incomes far greater than when they took up their studies. Many have shown increases of 300% to 500%. Some have incomes as high as \$25,000 per year.

You, too, can have the position you want in the work you like best, an income that will give you

and your family the home, the comforts, the luxuries you would like them to have. No matter what your age, your present occupation, or your means, you can do it!

All we ask is the chance to prove it. That's fair, isn't it? Then mark and mail this coupon.

----- **TEAR OUT HERE** -----
INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
 Box 2195-C, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please tell me how I can qualify for the position or in the subject *before* which I have marked an X in the list below:

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architect | <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Gas Engine Operating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blue Print Reading | <input type="checkbox"/> Automobile Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building Foreman | <input type="checkbox"/> Airplane Engines |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete Builder | <input type="checkbox"/> Plumber and Steam Fitter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor and Builder | <input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing Inspector |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Foreman Plumber |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Heating and Ventilation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electrician | <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Worker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Steam Engineer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Contractor | <input type="checkbox"/> Railroad Positions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Wiring | <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Metallurgy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Practice | <input type="checkbox"/> Mining Engineer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toolmaker | <input type="checkbox"/> Navigation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics <input type="checkbox"/> Radio |

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Salesmanship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personnel Organization | <input type="checkbox"/> Better Letters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Trade |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Law | <input type="checkbox"/> Show Card Lettering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Banking and Banking Law | <input type="checkbox"/> Stenography and Typing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accountancy | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher |
| (including C.P.A.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nicholson Cost | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Mail Clerk |
| Accounting | <input type="checkbox"/> Common School Subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeping | <input type="checkbox"/> High School Subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business English | <input type="checkbox"/> Illustrating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private Secretary | <input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Spanish | <input type="checkbox"/> French |

Name.....

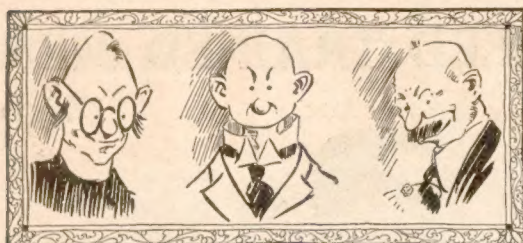
Street.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

Occupation.....

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada.



Learn to Draw at Home

Illustrators, Cartoonists, Commercial Artists earn big money. \$25 to \$100 a week and more. Learn at home in spare time under personal direction of one of America's most famous newspaper, magazine, advertising artists of 35 years' successful experience.

BE AN ARTIST

Delightful, fascinating profession. Wonderful new home-study method makes drawing easy! Send coupon or postal today for special offer telling of complete Artists' Outfit FREE to new students. Write for illustrated book, "How to Become an Artist." Don't delay—write or send coupon at once. Address

Washington School of Art, Inc.
Room 2138, Marden Bldg.,
Washington, D. C.

FREE COUPON
WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF ART, Inc.
Room 2138, Marden Bldg.,
Washington, D. C.

Send me particulars of FREE ARTIST'S OUTFIT offer and Free Book, "How to Become an Artist."

Name.....
(State whether Mr., Mrs. or Miss)

Address.....

City.....State.....

21 Jewel Burlington



Only \$1.00 Down

The 21-Jewel Burlington is sold to you at a very low price and on the very special terms (after free examination) of only \$1.00 down. Send today for information.

Free Book Send for the most complete watch book ever produced. 100 designs and engravings beautifully illustrated in colors. Write for it today, it is free. A letter or a postcard will do.

Burlington Watch Co. 19th St. & Marshall Blvd.
Dept. A-145, Chicago

MAKE MONEY AT HOME

YOU CAN earn \$1 to \$2 an hour writing show cards at home in your spare time. Quickly and easily learned by our new simple "Instructograph" method. No canvassing or soliciting. We show you how, guarantee you steady work at home, no matter where you live, and pay you cash each week. Full particulars and booklet free. Write to-day.

AMERICAN SHOW CARD SYSTEM LIMITED
Authorized and Fully Paid Capital, One Million Dollars.
202 Adams Bldg. Toronto, Canada.

Classified Advertising continued from page 4.

HELP WANTED

BE A DETECTIVE—Earn Big Money. Great demand everywhere. Travel. Fascinating work. Make secret investigations. Experience unnecessary. Write, **GEORGE WAGNER**, former Government Detective, 1968 Broadway, N. Y.

RAILWAY MAIL CLERKS, STENOGRAPHERS, CLERKS, TYPISTS, wanted by Government. Examinations weekly. Prepare at home. Write for free list and plan T, payment after securing position. **CSS**, 1710 Market St., Philadelphia.

SELL US YOUR SPARE TIME. YOU CAN EARN FIFTEEN TO FIFTY DOLLARS WEEKLY writing showcards at home. No canvassing. Pleasant, profitable profession, easily, quickly learned by our simple graphic block system. Artistic ability unnecessary. We instruct you and supply you work. **WILSON METHODS, LTD.**, Dept. G, Toronto, Canada.

HELP WANTED—MALE

BE A DETECTIVE—EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY; good pay; travel. Write **C. T. LUDWIG**, 126 Westover Building, Kansas City, Mo.

All men, women, boys, girls, 17 to 60, willing to accept Government Positions, \$117—\$190, traveling or stationary. Write **Mr. OZMENT**, 198, St. Louis, Mo., immediately.

EARN \$110 TO \$250 MONTHLY, EXPENSES PAID, AS RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR. POSITIONS GUARANTEED AFTER 3 MONTHS' SPARE TIME STUDY OR MONEY REFUNDED. EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITIES. WRITE FOR FREE BOOKLET CM-30, STAND, BUSINESS TRAINING INST., BUFFALO, N. Y.

Firemen, Brakemen, Baggageomen, Sleeping car, train porters (colored). \$140—\$200. Experience unnecessary. **836 RAILWAY BUREAU, E. St. Louis, Ill.**

HELP WANTED—FEMALE

EARN MONEY AT HOME during spare time painting lamp shades, pillow tops for us. No canvassing. Easy and interesting work. Experience unnecessary. **NILEART COMPANY, 2235, Ft. Wayne, Indiana.**

PATENT ATTORNEYS

PATENTS. BOOKLET FREE. HIGHEST REFERENCES. BEST RESULTS. PROMPTNESS ASSURED. SEND DRAWING OR MODEL FOR EXAMINATION AND OPINION AS TO PATENTABILITY. WATSON E. COLEMAN, 624 F ST., WASHINGTON, D. C.

PATENTS. If you have an invention write for our Guide Book, "How To Get A Patent." Send model or sketch and description, and we will give our opinion as to its patentable nature. **Randolph & Co., 630 F, Washington, D. C.**

PATENTS. WRITE FOR FREE ILLUSTRATED GUIDE BOOK and record of invention blank. Send model or sketch and description for our opinion of its patentable nature. Free. Highest References. Prompt Attention. Reasonable Terms. **VICTOR J. EVANS & CO., 762 Ninth, Washington, D. C.**

PATENTS PROCURED; TRADE MARKS REGISTERED—A comprehensive, experienced, prompt service for the protection and development of your ideas. Preliminary advice gladly furnished without charge. Booklet of information and form for disclosing idea free on request. **RICHARD E. OWEN, 63 Owen Bldg., Washington, D. C., or 2278-J Woolworth Bldg., New York.**

PATENTS AND INVENTIONS

INVENTIONS COMMERCIALIZED on cash or royalty basis. Patented or unpatented. In business 24 years. Complete facilities. References. Write **ADAM FISHER MFG. CO., 249, St. Louis, Mo.**

SONG POEMS WANTED

WRITE THE WORDS FOR A SONG. We compose music. Our Chief of Staff wrote many big song-hits. Submit your song-poem to us at once. **NEW YORK MELODY CORP., 403-E Romax Building, New York.**

TRADE SCHOOLS

EARN \$10 TO \$15 PER DAY. Learn Sign and Pictorial Painting, Showcard Writing, Auto Painting, Decorating, Paperhanging, Graining and Marbling. Catalogue Free. **Chicago Painting School, 152 West Austin Ave., Chicago, Ill.**

WANTED TO BUY

Cash for Old Gold, Platinum, Silver, Diamonds, Liberty Bonds, War, Thrift, Unused Postage Stamps, False Teeth, Magneto Points, Jobs, any valuables. Mail in today. Cash sent return mail. Goods returned in ten days if you are not satisfied. **Ohio Smelting Co., 301 Hippodrome Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio.**

ELECTRICITY

Needs You To Boss Jobs Like This



Be a
Certificated **Electrical Expert**
EARN \$3500 to \$10000 a Year

Some Features of My Course That Have Revolutionized Home Study Training

1. Practical Instruction—no useless, high-sounding theory.
2. Free Electrical Outfit—Finest outfit ever sent out for home experiment.
3. Free Employment Service.
4. Free Consulting Service.
5. Free Engineering Magazine.
6. Free use of my Electrical Laboratory.
7. Extra Courses Free—Radio—Electrical Drafting.
8. Spare time work—Special earn-while-you-learn lessons.
9. Reduced prices on all Electrical Supplies.
10. Cash Refund Guarantee Bond.

These features are all explained in my big Free Book.

IT'S a shame for you to earn less than \$100.00 a week when trained Electrical Experts are in such great demand. You ought to get more. You can get more.

Cooke Trained "Electrical Experts" earn \$70 to \$200 a week. Fit yourself for one of these big paying positions. Get into a line of work where there are hundreds and hundreds of opportunities for advancement and a big success.

What's YOUR Future? Today even the ordinary Electrician—the "screw driver" kind—is making money—big money. But it's the trained man—the man who knows the whys and wherefores of Electricity—the "Electrical Expert"—who is picked out to "boss" ordinary Electricians—to boss the Big Jobs—the jobs that pay up to \$10,000 a year.

Age or Lack of Experience No Drawback

You don't have to be a College Man; you don't have to be a High School graduate. My Course in Electricity is the most simple, thorough and successful in existence, and offers every man regardless of age, education or previous experience, the chance to become, in a very short time, an "Electrical Expert," able to make from \$70 to \$200 a week.

I Give You a Real Training As Chief Engineer of the Chicago Engineering Works I know exactly the kind of training a man needs to get the best positions at the highest salaries. Hundreds of my students are now earning \$3,500 to \$10,000. Many are now successful ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS.

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A Gentleman in Pajamas

By **CHARLES NEVILLE BUCK**

Author of "The Battle Cry," "When Bearcat Went Dry," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE ENEMY WITHIN THE GATE.

AS he tipped the taxicab driver, Prescott Barrows noted that the clock in the Metropolitan tower was pealing the four strokes which designated the hour. He further recognized that the hour proclaimed by this Gargantuan and inanimate town crier was one o'clock, ante meridian.

He yawned as he turned into the apartment house that was the hive in which he, together with a varied swarm of other human bees, had habitation. That swarm numbered workers and drones—possibly even a queen—but the architectural magnificence of the hive made unequivocal assertion that it was no place for any vagabond bumblebee who did not wing his way hither dustily laden with the gold pollen of acquisition and prosperity.

Barrows yawned again in the bronze filigree cage of the elevator, where he removed his overcoat and stood in the black and white of evening dress. The elevator boy, who was a substitute and as yet uncloyed with the sweet richness of the house, marked and was impressed by his distinction of person.

Barrows was tall and swung broad shoulders above a slender waist. His tailor, too, had served him with that artistic fidelity which is reserved for those who know the best and pay ungrudgingly to acquire it. His face, between lightly frosted temples, was arresting in its clear strength of feature and its quick play of expression, and his unlabeled photograph might have passed for that of a distinguished actor.

"Good night, sir," said the elevator boy when he stopped his cage at the third floor level; but Barrows only nodded a grave acknowledgment of the words, without committing himself to any admission that one o'clock necessarily ends an evening.

In his own apartment, where a severe simplicity obtained which shamed ornateness, the man threw down his coat, lighted a cigar, and stretched himself indolently in a deep chair before the tiled hearth, from which still came the last glow of expiring coals. Obviously, his mood responded to a deliberation which has time to squander and finds adequacy in its own companionship. His lips twisted into a pleased and whimsical smile, and as he studied the clinging ash on his panetela the note of the Metropolitan clock came again to his ears, this time with the single stroke that denotes the quarter.

He had hardly moved from his indolent ease of posture, although the cigar was now spent to a stub, when the same clock struck twice, and then three times; but a few minutes after the last note he arose grudgingly and stretched his long arms as lazily as a cat.

Then he began undressing, although when he had divested himself of his evening clothes it was not to prepare for bed, but to change into a business suit as impeccably fashioned as the garments he had just discarded. On the chair in which he had been lounging he placed a hand bag,

already partly filled, and addressed himself to the completion of its packing.

Here came a divergence in the essence of his procedure which was both startling and fundamental. In the bag a servant had already placed such articles as a fastidious gentleman may require for a short journey—say an absence overnight from his base of supplies—but what he himself now added held the interest of anomaly and paradox.

Out of a wall safe Barrows first abstracted a small metal object which was evidently a tool of some sort, yet no tool of familiar domestic application. It was, in fact, a burglar's jimmy. Such a jimmy has no legitimate purpose and serves the use only of one who wishes to break and enter upon premises to which he is denied lawful access. It was a second story worker's sesame—a housebreaker's password—and it was, of its sort, as good as the best. Barrows put that into an overcoat pocket, and then inspected and tested the condition of a beautifully compact and wickedly effective automatic pistol; after which he produced a third unconventional object. This last object was a set of nickeled handcuffs, lightly and prettily enough made to be real ornaments, except that for the fact that, once donned, they could be doffed only at the will of the keyholder, and for the other fact that a light but unbreakable chain would hamper the free gestures of any hands that wore them.

The gentleman seemed satisfied with this inspection of gear so foreign to his personal seeming and his environment, and now he moved lightly about his apartment whistling a tune from the musical comedy which had bored him through something more than two hours of that evening. He appeared to be inspecting the premises as if to assure himself that on his departure he left affairs in fitting order. He glanced appraisingly at a wardrobe trunk and a large pigskin kit bag which stood strapped and ready for transfer.

Eventually he donned a greatcoat, and slid the pistol into its right hand pocket. The handcuffs he stored on his hip, and, with these preparations completed, he paused to refill a monogrammed cigarette

case. As he did so, the Metropolitan clock was sending out its mellow voice of bell metal again—this time a quarter after two—and the man took down his telephone receiver, and having clicked it repeatedly, enough to awaken the dozing doorman, ordered a taxicab.

At the risk of making the narrative seem a mere diary of Manhattan's Big Ben, it is still needful to say that when the hired vehicle drew up at the destination given to its driver by its fare the same bronze voice from high overhead was chiming two thirty. Prescott Barrows stood where he had alighted from the vehicle, while the vehicle itself went slurring away over the asphalt. He held his bag in his hand and stood in unflurried meditateness on the curb, at the south side of Washington Square, not far from the brick contour of the Judson Mission.

The Square itself, at this hour, was a place of hollow echoes and empty spaces whose trees stood etched in stark ghostliness against disks of electric glare. The arch loomed to northward, solid in its naked white, with the avenue stretching as empty as a dead river beyond.

One other human figure stirred there, and this was slowly yet inquiringly approaching Barrows—garbed in the blue livery of the police. It came closer, scrutinizing the pedestrian somewhat as one dog eyes another while it sniffs suspiciously; then the policeman nodded affably and passed on.

To the rudimentary working of the patrolman's mind, a glance was enough to absolve this object of investigation from any suspicion as a night prowler and to place him securely in society's sounder category. For his part, Barrows, loaded with contraband and incriminating possessions, responded to the nod with a calm superiority that savored of condescension. When the officer had drifted along until the distance took him, the other man walked briskly to a block of buildings at the north of the Square where fashion once stamped life with its crest of sanction in the days when society's devotees drove in broughams instead of town cars. It was a block along which still lingered a hard-dying savor of

conservative wealth, clinging to old environs after the tide had passed.

The man with the bag was now actuated by an admirable certitude and familiarity with his ground. The house to which he went was a square brownstone margined by a narrow strip of lawn. Along its first floor windows went an iron grilled balcony over which twisted the thick skeleton of an ancient wistaria vine, clinging to the aged walls like mummified serpents of the Laocöon.

Its upper windows were mullioned and leaded, but over the whole face of the mansion, a house that had once known the magnificence of social preëminence, lay now the heavy stillness of shadow and sleep. In the third and top floor of the building next door glinted a belated gas light—but that house, although an architectural twin, was a renegade brother, grown shabby and despondent, lost to its pride of tradition and surrendered to the bedouin destiny of housing lodgers.

With a sure step Barrows hastened up the stone steps to the dignified entrance alcove of the house that still stood stiff in its erect deportment of aristocracy. After a moment in which he shot a quick glance right and left, he vaulted noiselessly to the iron balcony and stood with listening ears, close to the gnarled bole of the great vine. Then he tested a window, drew out his jimmy, adjusted it to the frame edge, worked with swift but unexcitable precision, and raised the heavy sash. All this was the work of moments. The rap of a policeman's night stick on stone sounded at a distance.

Stepping noiselessly inside, Barrows put down the sash again and paused within, motionless and seeming to gauge conditions by the very feel of the place and taste of the air. In actuality he was listening with ears as sensitive as the finger tips of a safe opener, but had there been light enough to disclose him and any passing eye to observe him, his figure might have seemed that of an indolent member looking out from the window of his club.

During his brief halt there just inside of the window he had jimmied, the three-quarters pealed, and from his present posi-

tion he could also see the flash with which the Singer tower marks the divisions of time.

As if he had heard a trumpet call, Barrows wheeled and his chin snapped up. His finely chiseled features set themselves stiffly and his movements became feline in their sure swiftness. He had flipped over the page upon which everything had been written in a tempo of almost languid deliberation, and now began another whose headline was keen and alert action.

In the pocket where the pistol lay flat one hand closed on its grip, and from another pocket came a small electric flash. Leaving the room by which he had entered, he went into the hall, where he laid aside his hat and coat, and started boldly but with infinite quietness up the broad stairs. At the stairhead he paused again and set down his bag. He waited, motionless, for perhaps thirty seconds, listening, and, his eyes becoming accustomed to the murk, began to pick out of the darkness dim impressions of shape and contour.

The spacious old house lay asleep, but in its age it gave off a few decrepit sounds; the uneasy creak here and there of an ancient timber, or the burdened complaint of a straining hinge. Then, too, to the super-sensitive ears of the visitor, came another sound more human, and this was the sound for which he had been listening. It supplied him with such a direction of course as does the note of fog horn or bell buoy to the navigator in thick weather. It was the half snoring breath of some one asleep in his bed.

To the room from which that peaceful note issued Barrows made his way, first assuring himself that from nowhere else on that floor drifted the breath of any other sleeper.

He entered a large chamber in which there was no light, except such as came from a street lamp through a wide open window. Standing on the threshold, he studied the place in its obscurity as a diver in deep water may stare through the opaqueness on the floor of the sea until, dimly, he makes out his surroundings.

A huge four post bed stood with its head board against one wall, and on it the cov-

erings were piled over an unmoving figure. A bedside table had place adjoining, and Barrows could distinguish, after focused scrutiny, that it held a book laid face down and open by a reading lamp, now switched off.

He approached the bed slowly, carrying the magazine pistol thrust readily forward in his right hand, but after looking down he moved away again and made a cautious circle of reconnoissance about the room. Against one wall bulked a squat but defiantly sturdy safe, at sight of which Barrows nodded. On a dressing table lay a watch worth perhaps several hundred dollars, and a purse. Barrows nodded once more, yet left these things untouched. A second time he crossed to the bed and leaned over it. Then with both hands he made quick, simultaneous motions.

With the left he jerked the chain of the reading lamp, thereby flooding a little circle of space with its incandescence; and with the right he thrust his magazine pistol forward until its muzzle nestled against the ribs of the sleeping figure.

This was not done with undue violence. It was a gesture no more obtrusive than that with which the fingers of a Pullman porter plucks between the curtains of a berth to awaken a passenger, and the man in the bed only stirred and grunted protestingly in his sleep. He did not at once arouse to wakefulness or alarm.

Barrows drew down the covers from the householder's head. In the light of the bedside lamp he was looking now into the face of a man past sixty, who slept as if he were a child.

Even in sleep it was not a soft or engaging face, but one modeled to an assurance of hard determination, shrewd acquisitiveness, and arrogant egotism. The lips of the housebreaker twisted sardonically, then he nudged the ribs again with the pistol muzzle; but more insistently this time, and in a quiet but peremptory voice, he spoke aloud.

"Wake up, Mr. Pettigrew!" he exhorted sharply. "Wake up! The Hun is at the gate—and inside it!"

Slowly the eyes on the pillow opened. Stupidly they stared out, then as conscious-

ness overcame the stupefaction of rudely broken sleep, they glared—not with terror or fright, but with amazed and outraged affront.

"What—what do you want?" stammered Mr. Pettigrew; and the lips of the burglar twisted again.

"What I don't want is to have to kill you," he answered crisply. "But if you make any fuss or outcry, that prejudice is conquerable. I shan't shrink from necessity. Still, if you don't make it necessary to shoot you where you lie, then—all I want is all you have."

CHAPTER II.

"FEWER AND BETTER BURGLARIES."

IT may have been that the elderly gentleman, rudely roused out of so sound a sleep in his mahogany bed, was for the moment beguiled by the deceptive softness of the voice that had addressed him.

The hour, indeed, was one suited to burglary. The house was locked and this visitor had presumably made a violent or surreptitious entry, yet he was unmasked and neither his clothing nor demeanor bespoke the desperation of the predatory classes. His enunciation was not that in which one might expect the command to stand and deliver.

Perhaps the senses of the man so abruptly called to face the situation were misled by these incongruities—but it is more likely that had his assailant been low-browed and blackly masked, his own conduct would have been the same. There was a suggestion of case-hardening about the lips and jaw that now reared themselves above the pillow, as the figure propped itself on one elbow and there was the reminder of highly carbonized and keenly tempered steel in the gray of the narrowed eyes. In spite of the depths of unconsciousness from which he had been called suddenly upward, it is probable that P. B. Pettigrew woke fully and clear-sensed on the instant.

"Is this some confounded, idiotic joke?" he inquired acidly. "Are you one of these zanies with a perverted sense of humor who make bets at the club that they can pull

a burglary and get away with it? If so, you're in the way of losing your wager."

"There is possibly an element of humor in the situation," responded the house-breaker equably, "but if so it is sardonic, and I doubt if you grasp it yet. However, there is no bet except one made with myself, and a man who bets with himself can't lose."

"Neither can a man who bets with himself win," asserted Pettigrew sharply and, with an amazing swiftness for one of his age and sedentary habits, a hand shot out toward the call button of an electric bell on his bedside table. But, although the hand came down unerringly where the push button should have been, it struck instead the superimposed left hand of Prescott Barrows—and there was no ring at the wire's terminal.

"You're starting wrong—all wrong, Pettigrew," cautioned the voice of the house-breaker quickly, with a sharp transition from velvet softness to flint hardness. "You must take me seriously—or I'll have to send you over. Get that right and don't discount it."

"Send me over? So you're a killer, too, eh?"

"I'm a killer—if need be—yes. I told you that at the start and I meant it. But that's up to you. Are you going to be nice—or not?"

This time the face of the man with the gun was less easy to mistake—his purpose less easy to misread. He still resembled a distinguished actor, but now it was an actor playing tragedy—with eyes inflexibly set to diamond points.

"Are you going to be nice—or not?" repeated Barrows, and as he spoke he realized that the other was filling his lungs. It might have been only the deep-drawn breath of one facing extraordinary excitement, but the invader's prescience as a reader of hidden emotions told him that the bold old goat meant to trust the whole snarl of life and death to a final protest—that he was preparing to yell and raise not only the household but the square.

Barrows stood close to the bedside. This time it was he who moved with creditable celerity. He swung the left hand, clenched

with the elbow indrawn at his side, and into the blow that Pettigrew took on the angle of his jaw went all the weight and all the wickedness of a short-armed jab conscientiously delivered. Had that wallop been executed in the squared ring, the sporting writers would have chronicled a fight which ended in a K. O.

Now, although Pettigrew collapsed on his bed instead of on a canvas mat, it was no less a knockout. His fragment of sensation had been that of sudden dissolution, of a world crumbling darkly away in one terrific realization of blunt shock—then blackness.

Barrows laid down his pistol and threw back the covers from the insensible figure. He drew the arms down until the hands met and over the wrists snapped his nickeled handcuffs.

With eyes that were frowningly narrowed he showed himself for a man irritated and disappointed. He had not hoped for an easy compliance.

No one had ever gained a concession easily from P. B. Pettigrew, and his own demand was drastic. Barrows had declared that all he wanted was all the other had—and that had not been hyperbole, but an exact statement of fact.

Pettigrew had made his boast in business of being always ready to compromise reasonably, but invariably his reasonable compromise meant one thing—that the other party should concede one hundred per cent and he himself should abate nothing.

Foreknowledge of this character had not led Barrows to anticipate a victory without combat, yet he had hoped for a chance to state his demands without so early a resort to violence. Now his victim would have to collect his senses when he had come back to consciousness—if he did come back to consciousness.

There was always the chance that a man well along the downward slope of life might not come safely through the shock of a knockout. He might have a weak or leaky heart, and the human clockwork, so jolted to a stop, might not start again.

At all events it meant a delay, and there was much broken ground to be covered be-

fore daylight brought its interruptions of awakened humanity.

But, reflected Barrows, with a philosophic shrug, there had been no choice. A Pettigrew who had balked so mulishly at the outset of the interview would have been sure to balk hopelessly when the full magnitude of the contemplated robbery was outlined to him and amplified. And it had need to be amplified into full clarity.

At its end it might still be necessary to kill the gentleman in pajamas. It would certainly be imperative unless he proved himself more flexible of spirit than he had so far shown any disposition of being.

If it came to homicide, Barrows had counted up the full cost and accepted the conditions of his venture. He was not a timid man and now, when he was staking his own liberty or life on a scheme of amazing effrontery, he was not to be appalled by the need of using rude methods.

He stood at the moment of the naked test. Now he must go undeviatingly through the thing to its end, and that end might mean not one death only, but two. If it came to that his own death would be in the electric chair, and death in a bed is better than that.

Had Pettigrew, lying insensible, seen the grim and merciless emotions that burned smolderingly in the face above his bed, he would not have played dangerously with doubts as to the sincerity of this house-breaker's resolve. But Pettigrew did not see that, or anything.

Barrows did not remain long in idle reflection. His color of thought was no Hamlet's shifting hue of vacillation. He turned from the bed where unconsciousness had brought a stalemate and knelt at the small safe across the room.

He turned its knob a time or two in experimentation and, to his educated ears, the light click of its tumblers and the feel of its mechanism told secrets that a combination lock is supposed to guard from all save those who know its sequences. Barrows worked away busily, listening and spinning the dial knob, forward, backward, and around again—until presently the iron door swung outward in docile obedience to his pull.

From the safe he abstracted a sheaf of bank books, sealed envelopes, loose papers and trays that held stones set and unset. There were such gems in the lot as a wealthy man might use in his legitimate supply of jewelry and such others as a connoisseur might acquire in his collecting passion.

That haul, so far as it assayed on sight, without inspection of the sealed or unsealed papers, should have satisfied any thief of less than imperial aspirations. The jewels alone ran to a value in scores of thousands, but all these things Barrows brought back and laid down on a table—not the small one by the bed, but a larger one against a side wall. This table itself was a museum piece—but it was not easily removable.

However, instead of pocketing what he had acquired and leaving the zone of danger while his talisman held its luck, the thief came back to the bed, noted the first signs of returning consciousness, and proceeded to aid and hasten them with the application of cold towels fetched from the adjoining bathroom.

At length, with the precursor of a low moan, sensibility came groping back to the eyes of the man who had been slugged in his own bed. In them as they opened uncertainly was a misty, shaken something like doubt and, if not fear, at least an emotion close-kinned to it.

Pettigrew looked up, and over him loomed the figure which had stalked night-marishly across the dreams that had come just ahead of waking. The figure stood stiffly, holding the pistol, and its face was one which needed no words to express itself while its dark and exaggerated shadow, thrown upward against the wall, was an inky emphasis of duplication.

"Have you decided to be nice—or not?" inquired Barrows in an edged voice.

Pettigrew, weak, shaken, yet stubborn, growled out viciously: "You cowardly brute!"

"You haven't tasted my brutality yet," the other assured him as the man in the bed weakly lifted and stared at his manacled hands. "You've only sniffed it from afar. The taste comes later—unless you do as I direct in full obedience."

"You'll do a long stretch up the river for this," snarled the householder, who found that his jaw moved stiffly and with pain, but Barrows shook his head.

"No," came the immediate contradiction, "I'll do no stretch. I'll succeed in stripping you to your hide without even being arrested or, for the matter of that, reported to the police—or else I'll go to the electric chair."

"If I'm locked up it won't be for larceny—but murder, and it's vital for you to realize that, Pettigrew. I'm treading no middle ground. You and I do business on my terms to-night or they find you here dead in your bedroom—and quite uninterested in what may subsequently befall me."

"You're a bold bluffer—but I'm not exactly timid myself."

"You're going to acquire a timidity, or at least a humility that your soul needs—and incidentally I'm not bluffing. I haven't gagged you because I hope the lesson you forced me to give you a little while back will be enough. If not, I have more advanced lessons in my curriculum—and the next one may hurt."

"Hurt!" Glaringly, yet with less open defiance than had first spurted from his eyes, Pettigrew stared at the man who stood above him, and his braceleted hands went to his aching jaw. "What do you call that first mule kick?"

"I call it a caress—in comparison with what may follow, and I caution you earnestly against repeating the indiscretion that brought it on; an effort to shout for help."

For a long and balanced moment the two men looked into each other's eyes. It was a measuring of wills, and in its silent duration the major question of mastery was fought out to settlement. It might have seemed that each was totally unyielding in hardness and stubbornness, but no two opposed forces are ever precisely balanced, and it was the eyes of Pettigrew that quailed first.

"Go on," he said shortly. "I'll hear what you have to say. This is a new kind of burglary."

"Quite so, but I am a new kind of burglar. There on your table lie jewels, not to speak of negotiable securities which I

haven't yet appraised, worth many thousands of dollars. Had I been the usual second-story worker, I would have contented myself with taking them and what else I could gather up on my exit. I would not have waited for the honor of a conference with you. Still I did wait. My slogan is 'fewer and better burglaries.'"

Barrows had gestured with his pistol to the table where lay the little pile of treasure, and with a stifled outcry—stifled with a haste that indicated Pettigrew's efforts to master the rudiments of obedience—the householder raised himself enough to see and recognize them.

"But—they were in the safe," he gasped. "And the safe was locked."

"That is to say locked against the usual second-story worker," Barrows reminded him. "We will call the incident, object lesson number two."

He paused, then suddenly leaned forward, and as if in anticipation of another deadening blow, Pettigrew flinched back and half raised his chained hands before his face. Barrows smiled grimly.

"You say you're not timid—but I see you aren't an absolute fool; that's as it should be. I don't ask you to cower. I don't ask you to fear man or devil—any man or devil, that is, except myself—but I do advise you to fear me with an absolute, pluperfect dread, unless you decide to act nice."

This time there was no answer, except hate burning out of eyes that found wormwood in submission to any outside will, and the crafty glow that told of a mind working fast behind the mask of a pale face.

"It is imperative," went on Barrows evenly, "that you accommodate your mind to a new outlook. Don't cling to reactionary standards and don't try to compare me with ordinary housebreakers. My mission here is in no sense ordinary burglary. It's burglary extraordinary. It blazes trails. It sets new frontiers. Comparing me with any other thief will bring you no nearer the truth than trying to gauge an Attila by the methods of a kindergarten bully. A failure to understand me will cost you your life. It also will cost me my life and it will profit no one. Get up!"

Pettigrew hesitated, then with laggard sullenness obeyed. His head was still heavy and giddy and his temples throbbed. He had come to the assurance that he was dealing with a madman whose brain was uncensored by ordinary caution, and who must, for a time, be humored. Later he would doubtless see this creature of unparalleled audacity shorn of his insolence and borne away in charge of keepers—but until then it behooved him to tread warily. Compliance appeared temporarily prudent.

In the basement servants were sleeping. Outside patrolmen were walking their beats. This absurd enthronement of vicious force could not long endure—so Pettigrew reluctantly swung his legs out of bed and felt with his feet for his slippers. He wished, though, that his throbbing head were clearer for strategic thinking.

Vaguely he preceded his visitor into the room adjoining that in which his sleep had been broken. Barrows followed, carrying the bag, into which he had paused to sweep those articles of value that had come out of the safe.

The burglar shifted two easy chairs by the center table of the room into which they had moved, a room sumptuously fitted as a study and adorned with rugs, pictures, and porcelains of rich worth. These things stood as the fruitage of collecting years; collecting with discrimination and avidity and a princely disregard for price.

In this one passion had Pettigrew been profligate, just as in all others he had been niggardly guarding his thousands as jealously as a poor creature who faces actual hunger defends his pennies. In this room and others of the house were treasures that greater gleaners had long coveted and which all their wealth could not touch in possession.

Now as Barrows spilled out on the wide table the stones that caught and flung back splinters of light and drippings of color, it was as though those drippings were from the heart of the despoiled victim. Pettigrew licked his lips in the spirit agony of one bereft. He was studying the face of this pirate and memorizing its feature for feature, for a description to the detectives who would be in in the morning.

"That is a good Bokhara prayer rug," commented Barrows approvingly. "On it a Sultan might kneel with his face toward Mecca. What does it stand you?"

"Several thousand," growled Pettigrew with spleen, and amiably Barrows demanded: "How much is several?"

"Ten," came the grudging response, and the burglar nodded.

"That's a Corot on the wall there, isn't it? It's hardly in his happiest style, though. A trifle muddy of tone, I think. Now, by the way"—he broke off and looked keenly across the table—"it's possible that I owe you, if not an apology, at least an explanation."

Pettigrew snarled. "Don't commit yourself too far," he made answer with a heavy sarcasm. "Don't imply the possibility of fault in yourself."

"Yet I was sorry to have to slug you. It was severe treatment for a moth-eaten and ramshackle old cripple like you. I would rather have moved along more gracious lines, if you had let me."

"My mistake. I was so unreasonable as to offer casual protest against robbery."

"You were so unreasonable," amended the visitor, "as to misunderstand me, which is worse. You thought in terms of resistance. It was hard to grasp all at once what I required of you. Still it is needful for you to know that this is a deadly game and that I'm playing it in deadly earnest. That knockout was only an intimation of what must follow if I am pushed."

"These things that I have here are only trifles, yet you were disposed to contest their possession with me. In submitting to further and heavier assessments you might have grown more unreasonable, unless you had been assured that I am ready to enforce my will—with death. You do understand that now, don't you?"

"Now that you've looted my safe to the tune of a moderate fortune, aren't you satisfied? Isn't that a good night's haul for a yegg?"

"It would be for a yegg, but for me it's scarcely a beginning."

"Those securities are all numbered, you know, and registered," broke out Pettigrew angrily. "You'll be laid by the heels as

soon as I report their loss. Those stones are all known to the trade and the collecting world. You'll be juggled the moment you try to realize on any one of them. You can have your little fling here to-night insulting and bullying me, but to-morrow there won't be a place for you to hide in—and if you leave me here dead, that will only mean the chair for you instead of the cell."

Barrows shook his head sadly.

"You make it hard for me," he lamented. "You refuse so stubbornly to understand. You won't report any losses to the police. When I sell these jim-cracks it will be with your coöperation, and I shan't be fleeing the bulls to-morrow. I shall still be here."

"Here!" almost shrieked Pettigrew. "Are you a sheer madman?"

"If only," continued Barrows in the same aggrieved tone, "you would learn that my words are chosen with some exactness and mean what they imply, you would save us both a great deal of trouble. What I have so far confiscated constitutes only such a fraction of your property as can be carried away in an overnight bag. You ask if I'm not satisfied, as though that were the whole story. It is, in fact, not even the first chapter. It is only the most sketchy and insufficient of prefaces."

"What more is there, in God's name, that a thief could utilize? You can't carry off the house."

"No, but I can take a deed to it. When you first asked me what I wanted I answered that all I wanted was all you had. Don't you remember?"

Pettigrew stared in dumfounded silence, and Barrows went on:

"All that you have is a fortune of about three hundred thousand dollars. Such a fortune is never wholly made up of fluid assets. It consists of realty, personalty and mixed property. In your case it includes an art collection of recognized worth, and such things cannot at once be converted. I should not feel quite safe in leaving you to convert them and account to me—I must, therefore, be near to supervise the operation. Otherwise, there's just a chance that you might cross me."

"Cross you! You scoundrel!"

"Ah, you see, your tone betrays your spirit. I could not trust you. To turn your estate into cash and turn the cash over to me will require several weeks at least. During those weeks I shall assist you. I shall occupy this house—though you are welcome to remain here as my guest. Indeed, I shall insist on your so remaining."

"Turn the cash over to you—you remain here—in this house?" The disjointed words and tone were like the groping of a suddenly blinded man through unfamiliar darkness.

"Just so. You see, your mind hasn't followed me at all. I told you I wasn't embarking on an ordinary burglary. What I am engineering is the appropriating of your quarter of a million and more; the taking over of your three hundred grand—of all you have—confiscation to the uttermost farthing, and to that end, if need be—though I hope it may be obviated—I stand also ready to take your life."

CHAPTER III.

THE GROWTH OF FEAR.

"I SUPPOSE," commented Pettigrew dryly, "that when a man holds the floor at the pistol's point, he's licensed to talk whatever arrant nonsense he chooses. My answer can wait until morning. Trumpet as loud as you like to-night. Your reign ends with daylight."

"Unless you can amend your narrowness of viewpoint," answered Barrows slowly, "your life ends before daylight. The three hundred grand—that total you've acquired through a period of years—is what I'm playing for to-night, and I mean to win."

Pettigrew jerked his head fretfully—and at the jerk became sensible of his bruises.

"That is several times you've used a vulgar phrase that belongs to the argot of thieves," he made petulant objection. "I wish you'd talk English if you insist on talking to me at all. A thousand dollars is a thousand dollars among gentlemen, and this allusion to so many 'grand' irritates me."

"Times and colloquialisms undergo changes," imperturbably mused Barrows.

"I had for some years put behind me all active participation in crime—until to-night. I had become impeccably respectable, and yet I have kept abreast of the advances in my old craft. I've even familiarized myself with the slang that is talked in the present day by those who are more active than I."

"I always had to remember that, though I was a retired man in a general sense, I had one job left to put across. How does Browning phrase it—'One fight more—the last and the best?' I've endeavored to keep in training for that farewell appearance."

"Is this the farewell performance?"

Barrows was gazing up at the wall, and he spoke with sudden irrelevance.

"Is that a Gobelin—that tapestry that hangs over the mantel?" he inquired with keenly pricked interest; and then as he waited vainly for a response, he murmured: "Yes, I'm sure it is. It's fruit of the loom that old Jehan established four hundred years ago. We'll have to dispose of that—convert it into cash. Oh, I beg your pardon. Yes, this is the moment for which I've been building. This is the goal toward which I've strained upward through the night, while others slept."

"To-morrow it will bring you to port in the Tombs—and before long to permanent anchorage at Ossining, doing time."

"Speaking of time reminds me that we are wasting it. We have not established a working basis. Let's get down to cases."

Pettigrew saw Barrows rise and move around the table toward him. The hand that held the pistol had been toying with it almost absent-mindedly. Now it thrust the weapon negligently into a pocket, but at the same moment the eyes went inhumanly hard and cruel, and Pettigrew found himself cringing on the margin of consternation.

Then, abruptly and as if he were handling something inanimate, Barrows took hold of the householder's throat and let his fingers close firmly about it. As yet they were not gripped to strangulation, but they were ready, and as Pettigrew instinctively raised his own shackled hands, he realized that the gradually tightening pressure held his life at its will—and that the will was capricious.

There was no solace in the struggle, and with that strength at his throat there was no chance to plead. Had he been permitted utterance at that juncture, Pettigrew would have hastened to shape words of surrender without stipulating terms or honors of war. With tropic suddenness the tide of affairs had fluctuated from parley to desperation, and to all intents the figure that stood over him wore the shape and spirit of death, with its deadliness nakedly unscabbarded.

But Barrows was watching the eyes of the other, and in them he read what the lips could not sound—the quailing terror from which nothing mortal is immune.

His fingers did not entirely loosen. Instead they slowly tautened until Pettigrew tasted the initial agony of suffocation; until he felt the horrible stifling that made his eyes burn and seem to bulge and his lungs to strain. In his ears unreal noises pounded, and through that imagined thundering drifted the assertion of his visitor, as bleak and final as death itself:

"Now—or hereafter—you die unless you obey me. I thought you understood. Understand now. Your life continues only so long as you think of yourself as putty in my hands—and act as putty."

Ever so lightly the grip on the throat relaxed and a little breath stole into the gasping lungs. Pettigrew sucked it in greedily and to his consternation felt the fingers tighten again.

"The breath you breathe from now on is only so much or so little as I decide to let you have," went on Barrows implacably. "Don't think that because others may be about, you can venture to call your life your own. I shall kill you as surely and as remorselessly in a crowded room as alone—and I'll never be without the means of doing it—because I've prepared the way. Do you understand?"

Now the hands came away and, sagging in his chair with his face purpled and his body limp, Pettigrew managed a shaken nod of hateful assent.

"Is that a Gobelin above the mantel?" repeated Barrows, speaking as one who puts an interrogation for the second time to a stubborn child; and Pettigrew nodded

again; he even attempted to gasp out the word "Yes."

"Don't you agree with me that we had better sell it, and convert its value into cash?"

There was a moment's hesitation, in which Barrows bent menacingly forward.

"Yes, yes," gasped Pettigrew hastily.

"Now," proceeded the persecutor evenly, as he went back to his chair, "perhaps we had better smoke. Where do you keep your cigars? I prefer the amenities of life to its brutalities, but I'm qualified for either—and I take things as they come."

With cigars glowing—or with one glowing and the other forgotten and dead almost as soon as lighted—Barrows stood before his host and conducted a one-sided conversation. His mood had veered, and instead of toying humorously with his victim, he put an unbending stiffness of ultimatum into tone as well as word.

"I have told you that from now on I remain here and regard this house as my own; that I permit, or require, you to stay in it as my guest. The courtesy I sought to use in tendering you that invitation was a thing you chose to misconstrue. Now I seek to make myself unmistakably clear. You stay as my guest to the eyes of your servants and visitors—but in fact you stay as my vassal, my chattel, and my prisoner. Your life is forfeit to me, and you wear it only as a borrowed coat—a coat lent by me, and to be taken back at my pleasure." He broke off, and Pettigrew could only sit gazing at him with a hypnotized credulity.

"The purpose of that arrangement I have already stated," went on Barrows. "It is that every earthly possession which stands in your name is to be transferred, as rapidly as possible, to me. Since stripping yourself of your possessions for my dear sake will be ineffable torture to your greed, you will often feel like balking—consequently it is imperative for you to bear in mind that any yielding to such a temptation on your part spells immediate death."

Pettigrew felt certain now, beyond any peradventure, that he was dealing with a madman of a most fantastic and dangerous type. He must accept every provision, disregarding its absurdity, and await the op-

portunity which time could not fail to bring him in early assurance.

"I understand," he faltered. "It's a hard thing to grasp; but you seem to have a persuasive style of argument."

"You're lying," contradicted Barrows, with brief brutality. "You think I'm insane, and that you're humoring me. How can a man live in the house of another man, coming in contact with his servants and friends, and maintain over him a compulsion that calls for intolerable surrenders? How can it be done, I say?"

"Yes, how can it?" echoed Pettigrew, bewildered. "Yet, you say you have thought it out, step by step."

"So I have," came the prompt response, "but you haven't, and you can't. You still believe that my control over you depends on our being alone in this room; on my being physically stronger than you; on my being armed and you unarmed. You still think that the situation will be reversed so soon as a third party intrudes on our tête-à-tête."

"I've told you what I think," muttered the householder, with a die-hard obduracy of mood. "Your answers are all those of a devil who for the moment has at hand instruments of torture and no conscience to deter him."

Barrows nodded. "Torture—and death," he supplemented, "not to mention ingenuity in their employment—but not only for this moment. Those instrumentalities will still be in my hands even if a crowd stands around us and the commissioner of police stands at the center of that crowd. To you the thing is sheer impossibility because it has never been done before. To me that lack of precedent only lends a fillip of interest to achievement."

"However, that is all controversial. I know that the seeming impossibility is to be carried out—and how. You will learn by experience as we proceed—so that's that. I am your absolute master. Once for all, bring yourself to accept my omnipotence, and you save your life by faith. Fail, and you lose it by skepticism."

Pettigrew made no answer, and suddenly the burglar laughed.

"I had not wanted to boast of my au-

dacity and power. I would rather have you testify as to that—as you will be amply able to do before we finish. Let me hasten to proclaim my modesty. Has it occurred to you to question why I have picked you out from all other possible prospects as my victim?"

"No." The old man spoke with a bitter irony, not venturing to withhold response altogether. "But if it's too distinguished an honor, I stand ready to resign it."

"It is not precisely an honor nor at all a matter of chance! It's written! There are greater fortunes in New York than yours to attract a gifted pirate, fortunes beside which your little three hundred thousand seem almost pickayunish. There are larger and richer houses to be plundered at no greater risk than this ramshackle rookery. You might reflect on why, with such opportunity waiting elsewhere, I selected you—and discriminated against your betters."

"I wish you'd been less modest. I wish you'd done better by yourself."

Barrows shook his head. "You think of my boldness as a madman's effrontery, yet let me whisper a confession. You are the one man in town—in the world—I'd dare to rob in exactly such a way—and where I might fail disastrously with another I shall succeed triumphantly with you."

Pettigrew's eyes narrowed questioningly and Barrows regarded the ash on his cigar before he continued:

"Yes, over you and your conduct I hold a peculiar leverage. That circumstance is such that aside from the threats of hurting and killing you, I can control you. Even if you were to succeed in having me jailed I could—and would—still utterly destroy you, manipulating my lever from a cell. I could—and would—strip you of wealth and all that makes life worth your keeping."

"Now," broke out the exasperated Mr. Pettigrew waspishly, "I may as well admit that I do believe you're a lunatic. Now you're raving hopelessly and rather pitifully."

"Again you force me to call you a liar," observed Barrows ironically. "Now, for the first time, you begin to realize my sanity. You begin to catch and follow my drift. It is borne in on you that even if

your valet and your chambermaid and the cop on the beat were to stroll in here and ask your pleasure—it might still be most expedient for you to hold your tongue and refrain from rubbing me against the grain.”

“I wish I had the chance of proving the fallacy of that supposition.”

“You will have the chance with sunrise—if you are still living, and I lend you the breath to speak—but you won’t use it.”

Barrows arose to stroll over to a glass-doored cabinet which was locked, and calmly forced the fastening with a paper knife.

“A collection of scarabs,” he exclaimed, taking out and turning one in his fingers, “and the cartouches show them to be good examples of the earlier dynasties. It’s lucky I’ve picked up some little knowledge of art values in my work-a-day life.”

He brought back several trays of the Egyptian relics to the table, and after a swift scrutiny, dumped the treasure trove higgledy-piggledy into his open bag. Once more Pettigrew gasped at the sacrilege of such vandalism.

“You see,” Barrows apologetically explained, “you and I have such a mass of detail to comb through that casual things must be summarily dealt with.”

Pettigrew’s eyes burned out of a livid face, for to his collector’s heart those seals and amulets of the Pharaohs and Ptolemies were dear beyond price.

Then the solacing thought came to him that they were all identified and authenticated treasures and could not be peddled like unrecognized things. He turned his attention to another topic and inquired with a rasping voice:

“How do you purpose to use this leverage that you brag of—this mysterious power that you say can operate even from your cell or grave?”

Barrows nodded. “Yes,” he agreed, “let’s talk about that. But first, we’ll consider your standing in society, to give us the needed background. ‘Who’s Who’ speaks inadequately of you, as capitalist and art collector. It says you are the author of monographs on various artistic topics and a prominent patron of civic reforms.”

He paused, then went on meditatively:

“Ah, yes, a reformer! The name is never lacking on published lists, headed ‘Pro Bono Publico’ and the like. Not a bigot with a burning ardor to restore the moral suasions of the Spanish Inquisition but knows his way to this address! Not a whey-faced meddler wearing the alias of moralist but knows that here he can get a large indorsement and a small contribution to his cause.”

“A man of your kidney,” snorted Pettigrew savagely, “would be apt to villify one whose social consciousness has been awakened.”

“Perhaps,” admitted Barrows dryly, “yet the fact remains that a man with so enviable a record—a man whose name stands emblazoned on so many uplifts, would be most reluctant to give all that up. He would weigh the cost of being cast down from his secure place into oblivion and ruin. I should say he would weigh it carefully.”

Pettigrew came furiously halfway up out of his chair and sank back, stammering. After a moment he broke out vehemently:

“What in Heaven’s name are you mowing and gibbering about now?”

“That’s for you to consider—and to estimate prudently,” responded the burglar. “Let us say that it all depends on whether or not you are superstitious. Do you believe in ghosts? Because I have a ghost call that will bring them trooping out of their sarcophagi, and I’m ready to sound the call.”

“Rot!” exclaimed Pettigrew, but his drawn face was a complicated study. “Only guilty or squeamish men fear ghosts.”

“Just so. There is a ghost named Provost,” murmured Barrows, half musingly. “It ‘could a tale unfold, whose lightest word would harrow up thy soul.’ Remember Provost?”

CHAPTER IV.

A GENIUS FROM THE MIDDLE WEST.

THERE was a silence, through which throbbed a fever pulse of suspense, and while it still endured the Metropolitan tower struck off a quarter of four.

Pettigrew sat in his chair gazing at the seeming maniac who smiled mockingly across at him. The older man was making a stern effort to maintain a sneering and noncommittal calm and attaining a reasonable success.

"I don't know of any Provosts—in the flesh or the spirit," he asserted bluntly.

Then he thrust out his chin and demanded with truculence: "Who and what the devil are you, anyhow?"

Barrows lifted ironical brows.

"Let us say that, in regard to the dispersal of the Pettigrew collection, I am hereinafter designated as the party of the first part. Let us further say that in preparation for my duties in that connection I have made an exhaustive study of yourself, your past, your present and the ordering of your life and household. I have advised myself as to the number and character of your servants.

"I even happen to know that your telephone uses a buzzer instead of a bell and that small noises disturb you. But these are trivial things, and I know others more significant."

While he talked Barrows had been taking out of his bag articles of clothing and toilet appointments that it contained and depositing in their stead the papers, stones, and scarabs that he had not brought into the house. Then he snapped the lock and strolled indolently over to the street window, where he lowered and raised the blind.

"I suppose you will want me to occupy that bedroom next your own, won't you?" he made casual inquiry. "In fact, it is imperative that I sleep close enough to you to be within the sound of your voice or movement."

Pettigrew snorted, then the festering of his sore curiosity gained mastery over his policy of more prudent silence.

"What character of spook," he inquired, "is this Provost ghost that seems to be part of your pinch-beck stock-in-trade?"

"You're quite sure," asked Barrows politely, "that you don't know? I should dislike to pretend to a greater knowledge than your own."

"I never heard of the thing until you spoke of it five minutes ago."

The raconteur set down the hand bag with its freight of enviable contents and, with it resting near his feet, seated himself on the edge of the table. He did not at once resume his narrative, and while he waited a sound broke on the stillness of the room at which Pettigrew flinched as if he had been snake-bitten. In his face flashed, first, a startled surprise, then a wild, instinctive upleaping of hope. The sound was that of the telephone buzzer—not strident or loud, but tempered to conform with the demands of this easily irritated subscriber.

Barrows was swinging his leg, and at the sound he gave no indication of either interest or alarm. To Pettigrew he only turned his head and spoke in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Perhaps I'd better answer it," he suggested mildly. "Your hands are somewhat hampered, you know."

The instrument stood on the table between them, and the burglar raised it. "Hello," he said quietly. "Yes, this is Mr. Pettigrew's house. No, it's not Mr. Pettigrew speaking, it's Mr. Barrows—a visitor."

There was a pause and then Barrows thrust the instrument across the table, with the casual comment. "Some one wants to talk to you."

Mystified and with a tremor palsyng his shackled hands, Pettigrew took the thing. In his wildly racing mind was the impulse to shout into it: "Murder, police, help!" but he looked up with frightened eyes at Barrows, and as the gazes of the two met and locked, he did nothing of the sort. Instead he only growled into the transmitter the gruff interrogation: "Well, what is it?"

Even to Barrows, perched across the table, the voice of the remote speaker was faintly audible.

"This Mr. Pettigrew? Yes? This is Provost's ghost, Mr. Pettigrew. I'm thinking of coming back. Oh, yes, they sometimes *do* come back. It's up to the gentleman who's with you now—and you. Can I speak to the gentleman who's with you?"

Bewildered beyond reason, the old man thrust back the receiver, and this time the distant voice was lower pitched. After listening, the householder heard his unwelcome visitor respond to it briefly. "In the

front entry in twenty minutes. Good night."

Barrows put down the phone again, then he turned to his unhappy host. "I'm sorry our narrative was interrupted," he said. "Of course, the ghost part was mere pleasantry. The purpose was to show you that I have friends outside. My raising the blind gave the cue. And now I must step downstairs. My friend the ghost is going to call for my bag and I want to set it out, so his ring won't disturb us."

He paused, then scanning the face of his companion narrowly, added: "I must inconvenience you a bit, I'm afraid. It will be wiser to cover your mouth with a towel and secure you to your chair until I come back."

Pettigrew, lashed to his seat, with a gag fixed over his mouth, waited in seething futility of spirit while the burglar went noiselessly down the stairs, opened and closed the door, and ascended.

The householder's tensely straining ears heard nothing, so that when he looked up and saw the other standing near him in the room once more, he almost collapsed in his startled surprise.

"And now," went on Barrows, removing the gag and the bonds, "we had better take up our story where we left off, because it's almost bed time."

"It is almost daylight," growled Pettigrew, and at the last word a note of hope stole into his burdened spirit and reflected itself in his voice. It was as if he had just remembered what daylight meant.

"The more reason for moving along, then. I have sketched your present. You live here in a fine old house set among others, all of which are citadels of conservatism. Your life is that of unsullied—if stodgy—respectability. You would admire to round out the peace and afterglow of this calm sunset untroubled by equinoctial gales. Then I come, and in me you see a stormy petrel."

"Is this drooling along in obscure parabole your idea of advancing your narrative?" inquired Pettigrew acidly, and the burglar seemed to consider the question carefully before he answered it.

"That may be sound criticism," he made

acknowledgment. "And yet I am not without my moments of action. I have put you to sleep with a short-arm jab and I have throttled you until your throat rattled. I am ready to snuff out your life like the guttering flame of an ill-trimmed lamp.

"Are you such a glutton for melodrama that, in between such commendable activities, you grudge me my little vanities as a stylist? However, let us sound the advance. Do you want to go on living this life, even if you find yourself guest instead of host—or do you prefer to die? Is it to be the half loaf or nothing?"

"I thought you were going to tell me the story of your confounded ghost—and make it relevant," snarled Pettigrew testily.

"Righto. In the time which my narrative concerns," went on Barrows, "we heard a good bit about crime waves and the felonious fashion of that season was the taxicab robbery just as the directoire gown was the smart thing in woman's wear."

The speaker arose from his chair and paced thoughtfully for a while, taking his stand finally before the mantel, which was one transported from an Italian palace.

"One day there drifted into New York City a gentleman with an idea. He came like Lochinvar out of the West—or Middle West, where the inventors of new crime phases are corn fed and robust—and his idea had merit, though it was not flawless."

Pettigrew grunted, evidently bored.

"For a time," went on the story teller, "this provincial visitor, who was really not provincial at all, but cosmopolitan, was content to study local conditions at close range. Like all men who have ideas which are not patentable, he hesitated to share his confidence. He needed coöperation, yet dared not accept it from any untested fidelity. Without absolute and assured honesty he could use no partner, because his idea was felonious, and for crooked undertakings one's assistant must be as indubitably trustworthy as Cæsar's wife."

"All this is very incoherent and rambling," interrupted the older man peevishly. "Does your autocratic power to rob me carry with it the privilege of boring me as well?"

"I had hoped to interest you. This man

from the West had evolved a plan for enjoying the profits of a corporation to whose management he was a stranger. In was an attractive conception, and he knew that in New York were gentlemen who would see eye to eye with him in acknowledging it to be so."

"In other words, fellow crooks."

"In harsh terms you have summed it up. He needed such a fellow crook, then, because all he had brought was the inventor's ardor, the formula and certain exclusive information. He needed the ready hand and the intimately sophisticated mind to transmute his idea into fact. He needed a go-getter."

"To rob the corporation?"

"Precisely. Now, some schemes for robbing a business are elaborate and intricate. Some involve blowing safes or murdering night watchmen, or even sticking up cashiers; but this was more admirably simple, and suited to metropolitan uses. It was an adaptation of the fashionable taxicab idea, and involved, in essence, only the kidnaping of a pay roll messenger carrying specie and currency to the value of about sixty thousand dollars."

"You regard that as simple?"

"In essence—and that recipe was about all the gentleman from the Middle West brought with him. What he needed to do, through the efforts of others, was to corrupt the youth with the treasure bag so that his kidnaping might not be too difficult; to grease and prepare the ways and subsequently to apportion the dividends."

"In arriving at these results, the selection of his coworker was a most delicate consideration. He was himself distinguished of bearing, passing current as a retired army officer of moderate wealth to all but the one man to whom he unbosomed himself. To that one man he was a genius—too capable for the provinces—too large for petty conquests. That one man, though himself belonging to the intelligentsia of crookdom, called him maestro. He sat at his feet and drank wisdom—also, he did the dirty work."

"For a consideration?"

"For a promised consideration. For his share in the three-way split of sixty thou-

sand dollars. He met and cultivated the young pay roll messenger; he led him gently and gradually into the 'gentlemanly vices of the sideboard and the racetrack'; insidiously altered the young man's color of thought from the navy blue of rectitude and probity to the more sumptuous flamboyance of ill-considered adventure. Of course, in spite of all his talents, he could not have accomplished his object had he encountered a hard and tempered resistance of soul, yet—"

"Yet what?"

"Yet the fault in the soul of the young fool was weakness rather than inherent vice. An equal amount of forging and treatment spent in another direction on the same material might have converted it into a very fair grade of metal, perhaps."

"Well, the fool usually earns what he gets, and gets what he earns. The boy is still where they put him, and he's not letting any more hand bags of money go joy riding with strange gentlemen."

"In short, your friends bilked the boy."

"Why friends?" asked Barrows. "They are only the protagonists in my narrative. However, to proceed. The retired army officer whose name does not appear on the service register found his partner, and proceeded with his plan. That they crowned their endeavors with success I take it you need scarcely be told."

"I am not insisting on being told any of it. Your entire narrative is gratuitous."

"Yet its moral will appear. The army officer had social accomplishments and an entrée; his partner had gifts of ability; and the pay roll messenger had custody of the pay roll. The originator of the scheme handled and directed the whole carefully developed campaign from a safe distance—until the curtain rose on the act that called for the rough stuff."

"He had never seen the boy who had been gradually weaned away from virtue and corrupted, unless he caught a glimpse of him passing through the office building, where he himself sat apart with more baronial conferees. When the boy with the satchel was abducted—an abduction which was to be accomplished with only a seeming resistance on his part—the retired

army officer promptly received the loaded hand bag. Expedience required that it pass into a keeping far removed from suspicion.

"Then, with the whole sum undivided, unsplit, unshared, the gentleman who had supposedly retired from the army actually retired from the partnership to which he had pledged himself—leaving his coworkers to bite their thumbs and take cover and dig in and sweat blood."

"So that some of the biters were bit."

"Precisely, and inoculated with a strong disposition to bite back. But as the story has come to me—and I hope to make it evident that it came rather directly—there was a rather distressing incident involved which affected the messenger."

Barrows paused, and Pettigrew gritted his teeth under the duress of his position and sat sullenly silent. The burglar resumed:

"The boy was one of those lads whose case would have interested a psychoanalyst, I think. He had the right by every law of heredity to have risen to a fair and honest success; he was gently born, and enjoyed the confidence of his employers.

"The thing which caused him to yield to dishonest enticement was a flaw in his composition, a weak streak which was struck and artfully played upon just at the one moment, perhaps, when its striking was effective. It was one of those coincidences of time, place, and mood, in which nature sometimes indulges.

"So when the moment came for passing the funds the instincts of heredity asserted themselves. A flood of repulsion came over the boy—and he sought to repudiate his bargain.

"He sought to hold on to the bag of money, not for himself, but for the bank. In consequence, the rough stuff had to become somewhat rougher than had at first been planned."

CHAPTER V.

ALL OR NOTHING.

BARROWS glanced inquiringly at the clock, and a slight frown traced shallow furrows across his forehead. He did not at once spur the tempo of his re-

cital, but when he had taken up his narrative afresh he gradually swung into an increasing velocity of utterance. For this housebreaker, whose seeming must be that of one unfurried, philosophical, and holding a sure mastery, stood none the less in need of almost desperate haste.

The night hours were rapidly running out their sands toward morning, and unless he had gathered and knotted the strands of his web about his victim before daylight, bleak and irretrievable disaster confronted him. In such case nothing would be left him but murder or abject flight—or both.

"Try to picture the whole thing as if you were seeing it, instead of merely hearing it in retrospect, P. B.," he suggested, using the initials by which his pajama-clad host was generally known; then, raising ironic brows, he threw in a parenthetical inquiry. "Do you mind if I call you Pro Bono instead of P. B.? It seems more consonant with your civic virtue."

"But to proceed. Imagine the retired army officer sitting wrapped in calm dignity in his hotel room, yet secretly scorching with impatience. He is waiting for a small leather bag to be delivered into his hands—a bag containing a fortune—and while he smokes an excellent cigar his inner mood is that of a runner set on his mark; of a hawk poised to take wing.

"Imagine him planning to default a division of the loot among his sworn brothers of the skull and crossbones; then flash from that quiet and sedentary perfidy to the human rapids down town, where fretful currents race along Wall and Broad streets. It is the hour of the noon jam, and you see a young man come out of a bank carrying one of those small bags such as bank messengers or pay roll men affect.

"He is a self-contained young man, fresh of complexion and well set up like many other embryo business men of that section. He turns from the door of the bank building and strides along briskly."

The burglar was talking now with a rapid, almost staccato clipping of his syllables, giving his narrative a character of galloping action, independent of its words.

"The young messenger realizes that he

must let no telltale expression betray his secret. No nervousness must disturb his face muscles. Still he glances instinctively about. He is assailed by that sudden sense of conspicuousness that tortures every novice in wrongdoing at the moment when he most courts invisibility. Every eye in that milling multitude seems to be searching his motive with penetrating suspicion; but he hurries along in an admirable shell of self-possession."

Barrows paused while Pettigrew sat glaring, and the raconteur lighted a fresh cigar from the box on the table.

"Let us abandon the historical present for the past tense," he suggested. "At a point a block and a half from the bank door the young man saw a figure waiting by a taxicab which was parked at the curb, and for the first time he hesitated.

"You have seen a horseman riding at a stiff fence—a horseman who, perhaps, is still something of a novice in the hunting field? He starts his mount at a smart gallop, and then almost unconsciously jerks on the reins as though he would evade the issue. His impulse of timidity is to pull up when it is too late to stop.

"The messenger's conduct was something like that. He had been, as it were, roweling his resolution as he rode—but it was a high fence that jeopardized his neck in a figurative sense and his soul in a very actual sense, and quite suddenly he realized that. He was a tyro at such steeplechasing, and when he saw the taxi waiting with a calm man at its open door that instinctive impulse of refusal overwhelmed him—the instinct of balking or running out at the side instead of forward over the timber. However, it was rather late for that."

The narrator sent out a white cloud of smoke and watched it curl and spiral ceilingward.

"I want you to get the picture fixed in your mind's eye, P. B., because it's vitally germane. The man who was waiting on the curb was not surprised. He was no tyro, and he knew the game. He could even remember when he himself had grabbed with that instinctive clutch at the reins. He knew that it frequently means disaster—that it may mean not only a

broken neck but a broken fence as well. He took a forward step or two and grasped the young man's elbow.

"'Steady on,' he enjoined encouragingly as he guided the boy forward. 'Every little thing's all right.'"

Again Barrows sent out a cloud of smoke.

"That boy was wavering, vacillating. Heretofore he had seen the inducements and kept them like burnished standards of bronze before his eyes. Now, between these bright images and his thought obtruded shadowy trespassers of fear. Penalties loomed, consequences half shaped themselves.

"The man who was waiting understood that, too. Such balking is always indecisive. Such a moment needs only strengthening. Momentarily, at least, the impulse of refusal and negation gave way before his confident guiding because his will was the stronger—and the two stepped into the car together.

"The chauffeur, who had his instructions in advance, sent the machine forward, threading its way through the congestion. It moved slowly, and the man sitting at the side of his younger companion realized that the sudden disaffection had struck deep. He realized that a mighty revulsion of feeling had come over the youthful conspirator and soured his ardor for grand larceny. Not only fear but the more dangerous thing of self-disgust was flooding up in him.

"So it was a precarious moment. The older man saw that his companion was cowed but not convinced; that he felt himself already damned, and was struggling to force his depleted courage to a point of belated resistance. The older man knew, too, that unless that courage were whipped up to the blue, thin flame of actual heroism, it would evaporate without explosion.

"While he had still stood on the sidewalk the boy's timidity had tended to keep him from entering the car, but, once inside, every impulse of fear converged into the panic of dreading a quarrel with the man at his side—the man to whom he stood pledged in a partnership of crime. That man saw his face go pale, and saw his teeth begin to chatter.

"The boy 'wanted out,' and he dared not say so. He was mustering his forces of will. He was seeking, after weeks of feeble-souled flabbiness, to melt and forge himself into heroic valiance at a breath. His soul was in the torment of endeavor—and had he been just a shade stronger—had he seized that moment as the great eruptive instant of his life—he might have died, but he would have died virtuous, in the accepted sense of the word. He did not seize it quite quickly enough—and he has spent his life since then in prison."

Again Barrows paused, and Pettigrew bit back the impulse to punctuate the silence with sarcastic comment. His guest went on:

"The man at the youth's side gauged the moment, and thrust an undrawn weapon against his ribs. You know that sensation, P. B., and its persuasiveness. The thing was still in his coat pocket, but the gesture was eloquent.

"The young man was armed, too, as such messengers usually are, but he was covered and still wavering. The car went forward, and the youth sat, oozing clammy sweat and growing livid. One could see that the prospect of a division of rich, red gold no longer thrilled him.

"What he most craved was nerve enough to plunge—not toward enjoyment of stolen wealth, but toward retraction of his agreement. His greatest wish just now with reference to that bag of money was to see it reach its legitimate destination—and finally he whipped and scourged himself to the fine and desperate ardor he needed.

"This time he was not drawing back from the jump. This time he was spurring pell-mell toward it, and with a sudden, spasmodic sound that was nothing articulate, he jerked aside toward the window of the car and tried to draw his pistol."

Barrows thoughtfully knocked the ash from his cigar.

"His companion was watching him narrowly. Of course, he deprecated the crassness of a gun-play there in the down town crowds—but the young man was acting in the mania of his single heroic moment. He got the gun out and, though a stronger hand than his own clutched at the wrist

and turned the point aside, he drew the trigger.

"There was a report, and the chauffeur flopped sidewise. The impulse of long training, perhaps, persevered in the driver. At all events, the emergency break ground on and the car stopped as it grated against the curb.

"The crowds that should have leaped about the taxicab, from which had just sounded the report of a thirty-eight caliber cartridge, drifted for a moment or two along as though nothing significant had happened. That sound was taken, at first, for an exhaust report or an exploding tire. Walk along a crowded Manhattan street and you will hear half a dozen such noises.

"But that was only for a few moments. The young man was on the side of the car next the curb, and as he had drawn, his companion had slugged. Now the messenger lay back stunned.

"When the crowds began to jostle about the vehicle, attracted by the sight of a driver hanging over the edge of his seat with hands clawing at his side, that picture was all they saw. The other man who had been in the machine was gone—and with him was gone the black bag."

Barrows tossed away his cigar end and sat with thoughtful eyes.

"The chauffeur was never able to tell his story," he presently continued. "Indeed, just about the time that the man who carried the black bag was delivering it into the hands of the gentlemen who waited in his hotel bedroom the ambulance surgeons were pronouncing the chauffeur dead.

"The young man who had been taken with a smoking pistol in his hand was being slated for homicide. He was too stunned to guard his utterances and was chiefly conscious of the fact that he had no bag to produce as the prize he had tardily fought to defend."

Barrows saw Pettigrew's lips stir as if for the shaping of speech, but when no words came he inquired politely: "Were you about to put some question or contribute some remark?"

"No," snapped the other curtly, "I'll talk by daylight. These are your hours."

"Even then," continued the narrator,

"had the young chap had his wits about him he might to some extent have maneuvered his way out of his cul-de-sac, but he was too shaken to marshal his wits and he made the mistake of telling the truth ineptly. He confessed his complicity in the plot and asserted that at the finale he had tried to draw out.

"The jury chose to accept only the part of his story which incriminated him and to reject the balance. Manslaughter is the unintentional killing of a victim while engaged in the attempt to commit some lesser crime.

"By his own declaration young Challon—I had neglected to mention his name before—had acted out the definition of manslaughter with text-book exactness, and the district attorney had a case, ready cut, to his hand. The looted corporation was not disposed to succor the defendant—who they assumed had, besides committing homicide, salted away, through his confederates, the amount of the theft.

"Even the man who had been in the cab with him could do nothing for him because—"

The speaker broke off abruptly, and shrugged his shoulders as if the sense of the assertion needed no words to complete its meaning.

Pettigrew broke his sullen silence, although with a cool air of indifference.

"Why, may I inquire," he demanded acidly, "couldn't the partner in crime at least aid his colleague with money for his defense? It was to have been divided, was it not?"

Barrows did not immediately reply. He sat instead with his eyes boring into those of the man he had already so liberally robbed, and his stare was glacially and bitterly cold. Under the rigor of that biting regard, the older man seemed to wither and shrink into himself, growing thinner and more mummylike.

"You ought to know the answer to that question—you sewer rat!" came the answer at length, with the sting of a whiplash. "You ought to know, and do know, that I couldn't help him with money because you had crossed us both, and gone South with the whole pot."

There was a long and heavily burdened silence after the bursting of that explosive assertion, in which the eyes of the handcuffed Pettigrew stared out with incredulous searching, and with a groping terror that grew visibly as a balloon swells under inflation. The man's lean and pale face became pasty; putty colored, as if until now he had refused to believe that this narrative would be brought home to him in terms of direct accusation. Incidentally, it was to the man sitting across from him—had that man needed such assurance—a full and comprehensive confession of guilt.

But that self-confession of feature and attitude was only the unguarded reaction of the first shock. At once Pettigrew began drawing up the blinds that he had let slip down to reveal the ugliness of his deformed soul. His eyes narrowed and his lips sneered. His trembling hands steadied themselves, and he drew back his thin and hunching shoulders.

"This is, of course, a fantastic fabric of lies," he managed to bluster. "It is all bizarre stuff that I never heard of before to-night."

"You thought that I was dead, and that no one was left to accuse you," went on Barrows quietly. "You read that a man, who was identified as myself, fell or jumped overboard from a liner between here and Liverpool. You swallowed the hoax which I originated because I wanted that old self of mine forever laid away beyond pursuit or prosecution.

"You knew that since Challon had never come in direct contact with you, and since he was rotting out his days in Sing Sing, you had nothing to fear from him. You thought that no one lived who could join together with a link of certainty the man who had been Provost and the man who is Pro Bono Pettigrew. Now you find the hypothesis incorrect and you are evidently disturbed."

"But Catewell was—"

The three words had burst out in the argumentative instinct of defense against fact. They came from Pettigrew's lips as flame leaps outward from lighted gasoline and as explosively. Then with a realization that it was too late to unsay them the old man

broke off and slumped back again in his chair.

Barrows laughed with a quiet note of derision.

"As you say, I am lying," he affirmed. "Otherwise, how could Pro Bono Pettigrew, the righteous, the socially awakened, know and speak the name of a man of whom he never heard? I myself was careful not to utter my old name of Catewell. Through all our talk I avoided it."

"But you—if it is you—" stammered the other, now pitifully demoralized and broken. "You are dead. I've believed that for years."

"The wish was father to the thought perhaps," responded Barrows suavely, "or if you prefer, let us say that I was dead and that you see before you a ghost returned from its cerements with a whole and zealous dedication to reprisal; with a ghost's immortality of resolve."

"But if you were Catewell or even Catewell's ghost—I would have known you. I would have recognized you at first sight," insisted Pettigrew.

Again Barrows laughed.

"I am an altered Catewell. Altered for the better, let us venture to hope. In those days of our association I was not strikingly handsome. I had a twisted nose and wore a red mustache. They have accomplished marvels in facial surgery of late, and I am a living testimonial. I flatter myself that, in this later incarnation, I am of personable appearance."

"You couldn't alter beyond my recognition."

"Then why," inquired the burglar quietly, "did you signally fail to recognize me—even while you studied me feature by feature?"

Pettigrew sat shivering in his chair. A nervous chill was shaking him and a cold sweat was drenching his face.

"That was all long ago," he whimpered. "I've lived it all down. I've invested and increased my money—not by theft and dishonesty, but by judicious financing and the use of brains."

"You haven't lived me down yet. You say you've increased your money," Barrows

reminded him. "You mean *my* money. I have not accused you of burying your talent under a napkin. I have not criticised you as an inefficient major domo."

"I have merely come to you for a reckoning, after a lapse of years. I am here to accept from your hands that which has been a trust fund in your keeping. I do not come to collect a dividend, but to take the whole, principal, interest, and perquisites."

Suddenly Pettigrew leaned forward and an avid light kindled in his eyes. Perhaps even yet he might effect an arrangement which, though costly, would throw up a bulwark against the trooping hordes of terror that menaced his future.

"See here, Catewell," he stammered eagerly. "We can still fix this thing up between us. We needn't quarrel. I'm late in settling, but I have the more to settle with because of that. You are the gainer, not only by an added sum, but by a multiplied sum."

"Under the old agreement your share was to be a three-way split in what we got. I'm willing to make it that now—not one-third of sixty thousand, but one-third of three hundred thousand. Could any man offer a handsomer restitution?"

Barrows smiled grimly.

"Too late, Pro Bono," he said crisply. "It was a three-way split then. Now I take all—and I make no discount for cash."

"Even in the days of piracy," wailed Pettigrew wildly, "no buccaneer made his own shipmate walk the plank. There must be something like honesty and generosity among—even among thieves."

"Too late," reiterated Barrows with the implacable flintiness of Fate. "Don't prate to me of the brave practices of buccaneering times in the Caribbees, Pro Bono. We live in the twentieth century and the days of chivalry are past. My terms now are simple: All or nothing."

He broke off, then added a sentence of amplification which his companion could neither misconstrue nor discount with hope. It was brutally direct.

"All for me, that is, or nothing for you but death. The choice is yours."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.



Dead Man Alive

By LARRY BARRETTO

A NOVELETTE—COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

OLD Pete, the barkeep, the Calla Lily, and her son stood silent, staring down at what a minute before had been a man. It lay sprawled on the floor before them, an awkward thing of twisted arms and legs, bent to impossible angles in the moment of death, with a thin smear of blood staining the white shirt front and dripping slowly, forming a pool, sinking through the sawdust and into the rough board flooring. So little blood and such a tiny wound; it seemed impossible that from it a man's spirit could have escaped.

There was no need for examination, however. Each of the three knew enough about death to recognize it in the grayish yellowed features, half averted from them, and humbled in the dirt of the barroom floor. The eyes alone, unclosed and suddenly glazed, would have told them.

In all the room there was only the sound of water drip-dripping from a tap behind the bar—the bar which was incongruously handsome in the sordid, shabby saloon. A mahogany affair, highly polished, its brass rail gleaming, the spittoons before it flashing back the light of the uneasy gas jets, it was the Calla Lily's pride, and old Pete's, who kept it clean.

Behind the rows of bottles on the shelf, arranged with their labels facing out, like squat, white fronted gentlemen on inspection, the great mirror, shrouded in veiling—a protection against flies—reflected the scene dimly: the three living people and the dead man, the table at which they had been sitting, an overturned glass, the opened door in the rear through which the woman had run at the sound of a struggle—all this, and more dimly still the pictures on the opposite

wall, the many little tables, and in a far corner the ancient automatic piano.

Juan, the Calla Lily's son, was the first to arrive at a realization of what had happened. He had the most need to. His eyes traveled slowly upward from the crumpled figure to the narrow dirk he still held in his hand, its blade ever so slightly darkened.

Withdrawing it through the dead man's clothes had wiped it almost clean. Juan's dark, stolid face became convulsed, his lip drew back into the black mustache, his teeth shone white for an instant in a frightened snarl, then he gave a hoarse cry. The dirk clattered to the floor.

"Let me out of here!"

Turning sharply, he lunged past his mother and rushed toward the front door. With a movement almost as quick, the Calla Lily flung her huge body against his and sent him staggering up against the bar. Then she seized him by the shoulders and held him pinioned, her face bent against his chest to avoid the frenzied blows he rained down on her.

"Lock the door! Quick, lock the door!" she screamed at old Pete.

After a second of hesitation Pete shuffled across the room, his dragging feet making quick time, and turned the key, which he slipped into his pocket. Then he backed up nearer the bar, where his hand was in easy reach of a heavy gin bottle.

Juan was wild in his quiet moments—now he was desperate. It was well to be prepared. But with the closing of his way to escape, Juan calmed, turning sullen, no longer struggling against his mother's force.

"Why don't you let him go?" asked Pete, his voice hardly raised above a whisper. "Let him go, Lily. He ain't got a chance here."

The Calla Lily, realizing that her son was not struggling, released his shoulders and stepped back. Her coarse red face was even more crimson with exertion, and she breathed noisily. The frowsy yellow hair, streaked with gray, had slipped from its restraining pins and hung loose about her shoulders. On one cheek was a welt, already puffing, where Juan's fist had landed. Her eyes, large and intensely blue, the

only claim to beauty that still remained to her, stared straight into the frightened black ones of her son—boring into him.

"You damn fool!" she cried, and her voice was like a wheezy organ which still held unexpectedly vibrant notes. "You damn fool! You've killed him! What did you do him in for?"

Without answering Juan averted his head. His mother was perhaps the only person he had feared until now. Now, however, with that thing lying there, every sound became a menace. He swallowed, and glanced uneasily at the door.

His mother continued, her voice rising with passion.

"I'll tell you! It's that floozie you was both chasin'. Ain't there enough girls in San Francisco an' the Coast, that you got to run a competition with Ryan's boy? I told you a month ago to give him his head if he was so crazy for that thin faced thing."

"She was mine; he took her," muttered Juan. "To-night he comes in here to give me the laugh."

"She *was* yours is right," cried the Calla Lily. "Now she ain't his, an' she ain't yours, neither. They'll get you good for this. How'm I goin' to get you out of this mess?" Womanlike, the first crisis of terror past, she began to weep.

Juan's lips were dry. He moistened them, "We might fix it," he muttered.

The woman stopped crying as suddenly as she had begun.

"Yes, we might! How? With you makin' a dash through the street the first thing, an' probably tellin' every one you met what happened? Think up something else. Oh, God, we'll be done for. You damned rat, as if I hadn't done enough for you all these years. All gone! My little home!"

Her glance took in the dirty room, and she menaced Juan with her fist. Juan backed away from her. There was no longer any fight left in him; he whimpered a little.

"I lost my head, that's all. We can fix it; I know we can. You can see some one."

"Who?" demanded his mother tersely.

"You know how much pull I got with O'Keefe out of the ward. Not that much!" She snapped a dirty finger. "We've been in wrong ever since that Chinese girl was found here. You know that. See some one? Hell!" Her laughter sounded hysterical.

"Let him go, Lily. He ain't got no chance here," repeated Pete monotonously.

Panic was rising again in Juan. He saw it all—the police, the whistles, more police; discovery of Ryan's boy, questions, himself led away—bars—inclosed. The room had become a trap. He glared again toward the locked door, stepped gingerly forward, his eyes on old Pete, who had the key.

"I gotta get outa here."

Pete grasped the gin bottle firmly.

"Keep away, you!" he warned.

It was then that the Calla Lily showed the stuff she was made of. She was a strong woman—mentally, physically. She had to be to run a saloon on Waterfront Street in San Francisco. A weaker woman, or man, would have gone under long before—lost grip in face of the fierce competition, the daily demands of a life where a quick blow to the jaw was the logical answer for infringements on certain rights, and where a quicker wit was the alternative before an irresistible force, such as the majesty of the law or the insidious underminings of rivals.

Times before the Calla Lily had risen supreme before the menace of such emergencies. She had had experience. Her younger days had been disreputable; her older days were also, but at least she had climbed out of the most obvious of the muck. Her chance had come in a Mexican dance hall, but that was ancient history. The only reminder of it was Juan, whose father obviously must have come from south of the Rio Grande.

In San Francisco, old Pete, the bartender, whom the Calla Lily had married for reasons best known to herself, had the doubtful distinction of having sired the boy, but no one took any stock in this, not even Juan himself, who baited the old man in so far as his mother would let him. Once again the Calla Lily rose to meet a situation, perhaps not the worst in her life.

"Sit down!" she bellowed. "Bean him, Pete, if he tries to pull anything. I want to think.

Three minutes later she announced her decision.

"It's done, an' that's all there is to it. Listen, Juan, listen to mamma." Her voice was persuasive. "You can't get away. Why, where'd you go? They'd nab you before you got across the bay. Even if you did make it, you couldn't come back, never. Now listen. We gotta frame it on some one else. Thank God the place was empty—that's what I say—or there'd be nothin' to it. Well, here we are, the three of us, an' nobody knows but us. Why not put this—this accident on the first unsuspecting stranger that comes in?"

Juan and Pete stared at her, bewildered.

"Who's goin' to stand for that? You're just wastin' my time. Better let me out."

"Who's doin' this?" yelled the Calla Lily in a sudden rage. "Shut up! Of course if some of the boys comes in that's known round here, nothin' doin'. But we gotta take that chance. Plenty of drifters, sailors an' dock wallopers, blow in. Anyway we'll have to try it; there ain't nothin' else."

"I don't get you," muttered Juan sullenly. "Spill it."

The Calla Lily drew closer to them.

"This is what's what," she whispered.

A moment later they had agreed, doubtfully.

"An' now we'll get busy," said the Calla Lily briskly. Action soothed her; the dread of what had happened was gone. She might have been ordering a new keg of beer. "Get that thing out of here!"

"I can't," said Juan, turning his eyes from the body.

His mother looked her contempt. "I will, then. Give me a hand, Pete."

Together they hauled the corpse of Ryan's boy into the back room and carefully arranged it on newspapers.

"More sawdust," she ordered, glancing at the floor.

Juan's teeth were chattering. "I need a drink—bad," he mumbled.

His mother looked at him closely.

"Just one, Pete, a small one. No, none

for me. If we get out of this I'll be drunk as a tick for a week. Put your hat on, Juan. Now, remember, if I give you the high sign, we start. We got to hurry. I'll get hell for covering this for even a few hours. Open the door!"

II.

THE cold night fog had drifted in across the bay, shrouding the water front and the adjacent wharves with damp chill, clouding the streets with soft, impenetrable mist that dimmed the lights and shadowed the houses until they became vague, monstrous things that loomed suddenly and disappeared again, swallowed up. It was a bad night to be out—a raw, bone-chilling night that sapped a man's resistance and lowered his vitality—a night when thoughts turned to despair, and memories became saddened visions of happier days which no longer might return.

The man who was walking along Water-front Street shivered and turned up his collar, feeling beneath the lapel for a pin with which to fasten it. It was terribly cold; his whole body felt numb with it; only his feet were warm, and they burned. He had walked a long way this day. At intervals he passed a lamp-post, the light above throwing a pool of wet blackness on the pavement. The street became less deserted; figures passed now and then, hunched into their overcoats, their hands thrust deep in trouser pockets.

Here there were lights within the houses, soft splashes of radiance streaming from shuttered windows, the sound of laughter and music—the shuffling of feet on bare floors. A dance hall. In the white transparency above the door the man made out its name, "The Tambourine." He lingered, hesitating to enter, and then passed on. They were gay and noisy; nothing to be found there that would meet his mood.

Before a saloon he paused again. He did not need the contracted feeling in the pit of his stomach to tell him that he had not eaten since early morning. Well, there was still money for that. He jingled it hopefully in his pocket. Within would be free lunch; a glass of beer, or perhaps whis-

ky to warm him. A figure, hurtling through the swinging doors, bumped into him and lurched away, muttering. The sudden shock sent him spinning, slipping across the wet sidewalk, and staggering to recover his balance. It filled him with resentment, an impersonal indignation against the saloon that had so greeted him at its doors.

"They won't get my money," he muttered.

But half a block beyond was another saloon, its door thrown hospitably open. It looked warm and pleasant within, and there was only one customer—a young man of about his own age. There was a woman also, a large woman with frizzy yellow hair, who sat against the wall placidly stroking the cat on her lap. The cat was a tortoise shell. Its fur at that distance looked almost the color of the woman's hair. It had been a long time since he had spoken to a woman. Sitting there so quietly, she looked good-natured. Maybe she would talk to him; he felt lonely. Without hesitation the man on Waterfront Street entered.

The Calla Lily looked up and smiled. Her blue eyes were dazzlingly bright in the light of the gas jets, and her red face showed nothing but indifferent amiability. One might have noted that little lines of tension had formed about her mouth, and that the cat, suddenly aware of fiercely controlled nerves, leaped with arched back from her lap, but beyond this there was no indication of anxiety. The Calla Lily had been an actress and a beauty. She was still an actress, perhaps a great one, for it had been twenty minutes since they had unlocked the door and waited.

She picked a few of the cat's hairs from her dress and then spoke.

"Good evening." The vibrant quality sang in the words.

The man who had entered looked pleased. "I was hoping you'd say something like that," he said, and smiled.

"Why not?" asked the Calla Lily warmly. "I'm the missus here. It's a wet night out, ain't it? What 'll yours be?"

"Beer—no, make it whisky, I guess—straight."

He walked across to one of the little tables and seated himself, sampling experi-

mentally the drink that old Pete brought him while he stretched and eased himself in the warmth of the room.

The Calla Lily had an opportunity to observe him unnoted.

There was nothing familiar about him; she was sure she had never seen him before. He was a young man, twenty-five, perhaps twenty-eight at the most, of medium height, not in any way remarkable except for the breadth of shoulders, perhaps. His face was rather narrow, with a mouth that drooped ever so slightly; wide eyes, beneath and in the corners of which were the faintly blued shadows of exhaustion. The effect was of an intangible wistfulness; a gentle air of discouragement sat about him. Only his hair was vital; the Calla Lily noticed as he removed his damp felt hat that it crisped and curled away from his forehead—a warm brown.

His clothes were shabby, nondescript—he had no overcoat—and his shoes were much worn. The Calla Lily was immediately reassured.

"Stranger in town?" she ventured.

The man nodded.

"Yes, I just blew in this morning from Seattle."

"You're not a Seattle man," she said sharply.

He shook his head.

"No; farther than that. I'm from the East—way East." He said it with something of pride, a pathetic pride, as though the words should prove an open sesame. "New York."

"Indeed," smiled the Calla Lily; and in this moment she kept the triumph within her out of her voice. "How come you're way out here, if you'll take my askin' as neighborly as I mean it?"

The stranger paused to gulp his whisky down. The fiery liquid warmed him—lighted hidden vistas.

"Work. I came from the East looking for a job. Things are mighty bad back home, so I got together a stake and came out. I guess we still think you're in the 49's out here—nuggets in the sand, gold in the cabbage patch and jobs for the asking, anywhere. Jobs! I haven't worked for more than three weeks off and on since I

got out here, and that mostly day laborer stuff. It's dead as dead up north, so I boomed down here. Doesn't seem much better, however." He smiled wryly.

"Well, now that's too bad," said the Calla Lily sympathetically. "Times is bad everywhere, but perhaps we can do somethin' for you. It don't seem right for a nice boy like you to be down on his luck. There's always work when you're in the know. Come over an' meet a young friend of mine; he's right at home around here, an' perhaps he'll be able to think of somethin' later."

She rose, a commanding figure in her tawdry dress, and waited by the table for the stranger to stand up. Bewildered a little and pleased by this unlooked-for kindness, with the hot fumes of the whisky mastering his empty stomach, he crossed the room to Juan's table.

"Meet Buddy Ryan, Mr.—er—Mr.—" began the Calla Lily firmly.

Juan shrank at the name, but he extended a limp hand in greeting.

"Downes is my name," said the stranger. "Bob Downes, from New York, Seattle, and everywhere." He laughed a trifle giddily as he seated himself.

"More drinks, Pete," called the Calla Lily. "This is on the house," she added quickly at the look of dismay on Downes's face. "Have you had supper yet?" she continued tactfully. "Bring some of the cold roast beef, Pete, an' a bit of salad if there's any left. Get a knife an' fork, too. One of the steel ones. Now we're all set. Tell us about yourself, Mr.—er—Downes."

The man from New York chattered on happily. He was warmed and refreshed; the world was a pretty good old place, after all. There were always people—kind-hearted strangers—it was good of this woman to sit talking to him—almost a bum. She was not quite what his mother would have considered up to scratch—bless her, but for all that—

With the third drink his eyes were dazzled; there was a pleasant humming sound in his ears—like bees. Bees in April! That was funny. This Ryan fellow was a quiet cuss—didn't say much. A good scout, though. He was going to find him a job in

the morning. Downes did not notice that Pete had quietly locked the door, and that the fat woman had left her place by his side.

She was speaking to Pete:

"Give him the drops—now! Just enough to put him out a little while. If your hand shakes I'll kill you—later." Her whisper was ominous, deadly.

Some one was offering Bob Downes another drink—forcing it on him.

"I can't—can't—thank you—mustn't drink what can't pay for—"

He fumbled the silver in his pocket.

"Drink it!" a voice was urging him. "It's our last one. We're all friends together, deary."

A hand was steadying the glass to his lips. He smiled faintly, swallowed.

Slipping—a crashing sound! Blackness.

The Calla Lily leaned forward in her seat and regarded Bob Downes, of New York and elsewhere, intently. There was no movement. He lay as he had slumped forward across the table, his head resting on his arms. She rolled his head to one side and stared at his eyelids, but they remained closed. Then she sprang to her feet; her voice was a whisper again, and one sensed the terrible strain she had been under.

"How long?" She turned to Pete.

The bartender shrugged.

"Five minutes, ten, fifteen—depends what shape he's in. I hardly slipped him enough to do the trick."

The Calla Lily gave her orders like a general.

"Bring in Ryan. Sweep back the top of the sawdust. Juan, this knife; you know what to do with it." She extended the steel table knife that Pete had placed beside the plate. "You won't!" Her great fist swung forward and landed on his mouth. "Now, damn you, fix it! You get that yellow streak from your dirty Mex father—not from me, thank God!"

Juan had shrunk back, spitting and cursing softly, wiping his bruised lips with the back of his hand; but he took the knife from her hand.

"It is different with the dead," he muttered.

"Hurry!" whispered the Calla Lily imperatively. "I'll watch his eyelids."

Vague lights were flickering before Bob Downes's eyes; they were like red specks that floated upward. There was a confused roaring—a man's voice taunting him—something, some one had struck him in the face—by God! His hand had clenched, swung out. Some one was screaming in his ear—hands were holding him, clutching his shoulders. He struggled blindly to his feet and the table toppled with a crash.

Slowly the mists cleared away. The gas lights still filled the saloon with a harsh, white glow; oddly enough the first thing his eyes rested on was the tortoise shell cat far in one corner, its fur raised, regarding them speculatively. The hands were still holding him, and he pushed them away impatiently. They dropped from his shoulders. Then he looked down.

At his feet lay a man, crumpled awkwardly, face down, his head half covered by a brown felt hat, the features invisible. About and around the half hidden chest a dark stain spread and sank into the sawdust—sawdust which had been smooth and clean before. Beside the man lay a knife, the table knife, its steel blade reddened. Only the bartender and the yellow-haired woman remained in the room with him; they and the cat, whose eyes were wide and unblinking. The man whose whisky he had drunk, the man who was going to get him a job—that Ryan, lay before him, dead.

Something terrible had happened. A groan burst from Bob Downes's lips. The fat woman was talking to him, talking in a dreadful, screaming whisper, her mouth close to his ear; crying again and again that he had killed—he, Downes, a murderer; cursing, imploring, menacing him with her clutching hands, driving home the unbelievable truth—that he had killed!

The whisky fumes still clouded his brain; his empty stomach retched with nausea. With a sob he dropped back into the chair and covered his eyes. This, then, was the end. All his hopes, his ambitions, his struggles to find work, all his little desires, puny things, ended the first night in a saloon brawl in a strange town, ended for him forever by a man he did not know, for a cause

he could not remember—by a man whose dead body stretched before him was a barrier which he could never cross.

Soon they would call the police. There would be a trial, he supposed, and people testifying, the old man and this woman; they had seen it all. His numbed brain tried to think of extenuating circumstances—intoxicated, half starved, unprovoked assault. But was it unprovoked? Memory refused to reveal. Perhaps they would let him off light. How light? Twenty years—life. He could not even remember whether there was a death penalty in this State. Death! A clammy sweat broke out on him, shuddering down his spine; fear, and realization, at last, had him by the throat.

The Calla Lily was speaking more quietly now. Automatically he listened.

"We're all done for—you, me, Pete. They'll close up my little place, my little home, and I'll be flung out, an old woman with nowhere to go. Oh, God!" she wept. "An' all for a bum I take in off the streets. It might be fixed, though—" She quieted for a moment.

"How?" The words rasped up through Bob Downes's throat.

"We know you didn't mean to kill him," went on the Calla Lily earnestly. "Sometimes those things happen. But there ain't nothin' we can do for you—nothin' but tell the truth an' that won't help much. If I was in right myself I wouldn't make a move, no, not for you or any one else, but they want to get somethin' on me. There's people in this district who'd be glad enough to see me in a tight place. But if you was to leave before it's known—get out sudden-like, it might never come out. There's a boat goin' out to Alaska to-night; she'll be towed out soon. We, Pete an' I, can get you on board with luck. Six months in the salmon fisheries—will you go?"

A ray of hope shot through Bob. She was good!

"But—but what about that?" he whispered, pointing to the floor.

"It's a dark night," answered the Calla Lily thickly. "We're near the water. Leave it to old Pete an' me. A body found floating a few days later with a knife wound in the chest. It's happened before. They'll

look around a bit, but too late; while you—you'll be on your way to Alaska. Will you go? Quick! It's that or the police; I daren't wait."

"I'll go!" gasped Bob. "Show me how." He rose to his feet, steady now, obsessed only with the thought of escape.

"Pete will take you. Look out the door first an' see that no one's comin'. Good-by, boy. I'm sorry. Whatever happens don't squeal on us. I done my best for you."

She stood before him, her blue eyes soft, swimming, looking into his; still an actress, in memory still a beautiful woman.

Bob gulped his gratitude.

"I won't, by Heaven; I won't!" Then they were gone.

For five minutes the Calla Lily waited. Then she went to the door of the back room and called softly. Juan stepped out.

"You heard all?"

"Yes."

"Good. Hurry off, then, to some one, one of your women who can give you an all-night alibi. I'll wait till twelve an' then give the alarm, sayin' he got away before I could get help. The boat will be out by then. We'll have hard goin', but we'll make it. After they've scoured the country hereabouts for a coupla weeks they'll get wise that he's on a boat. By the time he gets to Unimak Pass a revenue cutter will take him off. By that time he'll be sure he done it, an' he'll get balled up tryin' to protect us at first. They'll pin it on him, all right. As if we had one chance in a thousand of gettin' rid of the body—an' the floor like that!"

Her mood changed.

"My Juan, my baby, mamma's boy. Oh, my little Juan, I done this for you!"

She caught him in her arms and pulled his head down to her face. Juan endured her caress without emotion.

"I don't like it," he said. "By the time the cops get here the body will be stone-cold. How you goin' to explain that?"

"Explain! They'll not get much explaining out of a drunken woman. Maybe I was unconscious for an hour after it happened. Why not? This clip on the cheek you gave me, I can say he done. Anyway,

'get out an' keep your mouth shut. Show up in the morning as usual, unless they come for you to-night. Then don't make no fuss.'

Without a word Juan disappeared through the rear door.

Left alone the Calla Lily caught up a whisky bottle and held it to her lips. Again she raised it in a long draft. A hot glow invaded her and her troubles lightened. A third time she drank, watching the slow-moving clock with a shrewd eye. She would be frightfully intoxicated, but she would not forget the hour, neither would she forget a single thing of what she had to say. Her legs became somewhat unsteady and she slipped to the floor, the bottle still clasped in her hand. Only the cat with wide, staring eyes, and the man who could no longer see, kept vigil with the Calla Lily.

III.

THE wharves of the Northern Waters Salmon Company were deserted save for a watchman who patrolled slowly back and forth, stopping at intervals to light his pipe; the flare from the match showing for a moment the spiles rising damp and rotting, coils of rope and a few crates waiting to be loaded.

Beyond, and showing faintly against the blackness of sky, a forest of spars reared from the ships moored along the water front. At the end of the wharf lay the Sea Urchin, mistress of the fleet of barks which flew the company's flag, waiting for the tug to take her out at midnight, ready to sail come morning. A dark, squat mass, all her graceful lines lost in the swirls of fog, she tugged uneasily at her hawsers, rasping against the piles with the rising tide.

All aboard was quiet; the gangs for the salmon fisheries had come aboard at sundown, a shouting, swearing mob of men—Finns, Swedes, Danes, Germans, Irish-Americans, who had signed on, glad for the chance that gave them food and work, and an escape from the monotony of shore life or the business depression that had settled over the land like an inanimate creature of despair, slowing the wheels of factories, curtailing construction and industry.

Keeping to the darker shadows, avoiding the open spaces, Pete and Bob Downes at last reached the entrance of the wharf. There was a free passage to the bark; the watchman for the moment was in one corner, his back turned, arms flailing against his chest in an effort to defeat the dampness, while he gazed pensively across the open water lapping at the pierhead. Without more than a cursory attempt at concealment the old barkeep walked across the rough planking with one arm flung around Bob's shoulders.

From time to time he silenced the young man's half muttered exclamations, his anxious attempts to justify the tragedy, with a gesture. Evidently Pete was in a hurry; evidently, also, he desired no more conversation than was absolutely necessary. Even now this stranger, upon whom they were engaged in saddling a crime, was more than half drugged. Before the effects of the stupor should wear off, before the wholly unavoidable discrepancies in the plot forced themselves on his unclouded brain, he must be safely on board the ship, and at sea. There, with only dim memories of what had occurred to depend upon, and with the torturing fear of detection, he would soon convince himself that what had happened he alone was responsible for.

Further, it would give the Calla Lily additional time in which to strengthen the links of evidence against him. She was clever, his Lily. At the thought of her quick wit in face of a desperate emergency old Pete's heart warmed. But for her he would have seen Juan hanged with indifference. A bad lot, that. The Calla Lily was different. Representing as she did the last passion of his life, the final flare-up before the ebbing of his forces, he would, at her command, gladly have substituted himself for this stranger had it been necessary.

To others she was a raddled, horrible woman, no longer young, with a career of crime behind her that would have made the police of any city wary; to Pete she was still the beautiful blond thing who had danced in the miners' saloons in those far-off, mad Mexican days, and whom he had loved with the infatuation of a lonely man fresh from months of prospecting.

But no one, not even Juan, knew this. And if the Calla Lily for reasons of her own had chosen to return to her discarded husband years later, bringing with her the child of an unfortunate adventure, that was her affair, too.

They had reached the gangplank that led to the Sea Urchin, the steep angle of it becoming more and more level with the deck as the tide rose. Pete drew Bob into the shadows for a last whispered word of instruction.

"Slide up now, and down into the hold, aft. They won't be nobody about, an' if there is they'll think you're one of the laborers goin' up on deck for a moment—there's a big crowd aboard. When you get down you'll have to shift for yourself. Hide behind a bulkhead or somethin' until the boat has been towed out. *Don't* come out till she's free from land; stick it a couple of days if you can. Here's some food—all I could get together in the house. Take it. A bottle of whisky an' water, too. You'll need that."

From beneath his coat he drew a bundle and thrust it into Bob's hand.

"Mind now, whatever happens don't let us in on this. We done our best, an' from now on you gotta stand alone. Even if you told the truth it wouldn't help you none, an' we'd be dished."

Dazed, numb with the wretchedness of his situation, Bob could only nod silently. He half extended his hand, and then drew it back. After all, not an hour before it had been the agent of violent death. How was he to know that this decent old man would want to shake it? Immediately he felt himself degraded, swept below the level of the people surrounding him—a fleeing criminal! Old Pete seemed about to speak, to add perhaps some kindly word of farewell. If so, he changed his mind.

"Up you go!" he whispered sharply. "I want to see the last of you."

A moment later Bob Downes had disappeared over the side, slinking through the shadows, trembling with uncontrollable fear at the strange sea noises, the creaking of the cordage, the dull boom of the waves slapping beneath the bow.

When he awoke the ship was moving.

There was a smooth, steady rush of water past the sides, and the floor on which he was lying seemed unpleasantly slanted. Behind his hiding place a rampart of sacks—sacks that contained rice, he discovered from a hole in one of them—he peered forth in an endeavor to see something of his surroundings. It had been dark when he cautiously entered the open hatch and crept down past the bunks of sleeping men into this walled-off corner. Here in the fetid air, exhausted by the events of the evening, and now suddenly drowsy, he had dropped quickly into heavy slumber, his head pillowed on his arms. It was still night, he decided, as he looked out of the narrow opening between the sacks, but a fresher current of air swept down from above.

About him rose the snores and stertorous breathing of the sleepers; some one in the clutch of a nightmare moaned softly, and close at hand another tossed and cursed uneasily. Bob drew back into his shelter in sudden alarm. The tug might not have cast off from the ship; even now there might be a last-minute inspection and discovery meant his return to shore. He lay there in the uncomfortable dark, and pictures rose before his eyes, quick flashes of all his past life, as it is said a drowning man sees them.

They came irrationally and without sequence: The long ride across the country; the search for work in a half dozen towns of the Northwest; the grateful warmth of a hotel in Olympia, into the lobby of which he had wandered one night; then farther back, a memory of Broadway, spangled with lights—a glittering twinkling mass above—a somber, moving mass below.

He had believed himself sophisticated then, armed with all the knowledge and assurance of youth. New York hadn't held him. No, nor had the dreamy old town up-State; he had left that years ago, too many years for the progress he had made. Progress! It had led to this: the saloon, the crumpled figure at his feet—a spreading stain. Once again the agonizing pictures began.

His head ached atrociously, the slight heave of the ship gave him a feeling of nausea. The thought that sea-sickness

might lead to his discovery brought added fear. His throat was dry; it felt strangely thick for the few drinks he had had. Carefully he reached for the bottle Pete had given him and removed the cork. Ah! Whisky and water, the old man had said. He felt braced as he drank sparingly. Once again a feeling of lethargy descended on him, pleasant this time, and he slept.

The sound of voices awoke him, a chattering in a half dozen alien tongues. Men were rolling from their bunks, sitting on sea chests lacing their boots, arguing, quarreling, laughing in the thrill of adventure just started. The smell of food permeated the air. With infinite caution Bob raised himself and peered through the opening in the sacks. A dim gray light drifted down from above, and tin lanterns, hanging on chains, brightened the hold.

He could see details which had been lost in the darkness. It seemed as though the place was filled with a maze of bunks, three high, made of rough boards put together with crude workmanship, extending in even rows with narrow passages between. The floor was littered with chests and bundles, and a table, supported by poles, which might be raised at will had been lowered from the ceiling until it rested on the rings which surrounded the poles, running through holes at either end. A Chinaman was placing a huge bowl of something which steamed on it, and there was a scrambling for places.

Bob looked in amazement at the men. In the dimness, as his eyes became accustomed to it, he recognized Mexicans, Japanese, slighter men, with dusky skins, who might be Filipinos, and swarthy, short men, tremendously muscled, who might be Italians or Portuguese. Later he was to learn that he had stumbled into the hold reserved for the "contract labor" who were hired by a Chinaman, the fat, bland person who was serving the food brought in from the galley.

They were the sweepings of the slums, men hired at low wages, the major part of which returned to the Chinese boss in return for extra food and such delicacies as he sold in his "store." It amounted to virtual slavery since, at the end of a voyage, there was only a few dollars due each one for his

months of work in the salmon fisheries. The "white" labor—Swedes, Finns, and Germans, who signed themselves on, and were not transported from place to place like cattle, lived in the forecastle and never mixed with the jabbering crew in this hold. Between them existed such a difference in station that it was impossible to imagine one group invading the living quarters of the other. Indeed, it was forbidden.

It was, Bob felt, like being a fly on a wall—unseen yet seeing everything. At times the men were so close that, had he reached out his hand, he might have touched them. What would they think if they were suddenly to realize that within a few feet of them lay a murderer? Once the impulse to shout, to cry aloud the truth about himself became almost irresistible.

Better to end it all than to lie here behind the rice sacks aching in every bone and nauseated by the pitching of the ship. He drew himself up, almost ready to crawl out, and then this new fear was on him again. There would be questions. He must wait—wait until he had thought of a plan which should guarantee him some measure of safety; if not for his own sake, at least for those people who had helped him to escape—the barkeeper and the yellow-haired woman.

The day wore on, and drowsy in the infected air, he slept at intervals. From time to time the men in the hold disappeared in the direction of the deck above, only to return in a few minutes, shivering. It must be cold outside. Usually they were content to remain in the semiobscurity of this place, talking, repairing their small stock of clothing and playing games—poker, fantan, and in one corner some one had begun dealing three-card monte.

Bob found that the bottle of whisky and water was nearly two-thirds empty. Suffering from sea-sickness and with a heavy thirst from the liquor of the previous night, he had drunk more than he had realized. His stock of food remained practically untouched, but the question of water frightened him. Without it he could not remain much longer in concealment. He had hoped to stay in hiding for three days; by then they would be well out to sea, and the dan-

ger, he thought, of being transferred to a home-going ship practically avoided. He had no idea, even, whether this vessel stopped at another port. Until there was a chance of safety he must remain hidden.

His thirst became maddening; it seemed that because he would not permit himself even a sip it had increased a hundredfold. To his imagination it was as if his tongue had begun to swell—enormous, out of all proportion to the size of his mouth—and that it was choking him. The ship had evidently reached the open seas and began to pitch violently. Tears of misery trickled down Bob's cheeks, and their saltiness moistened for a moment the dryness of his lips. At last in desperation he wrenched a button from his coat, and began sucking it in an effort to promote the flow of saliva. It brought some relief, and finally he slept again.

When he awoke the patch of gray light at the head of the ladder reaching to the deck had disappeared, and all the lanterns were lighted. The men had evidently eaten their evening meal, and were now stretched on their bunks, grumbling in low voices or reading newspapers, their heads bent low over the fine print. Almost directly in front of Bob's wall of sacks a poker game had been started with five men squatting around a sea chest. For a moment he feared for his concealment, but they were absorbed in the game and, after a time, raising his head cautiously, he dared to watch them.

They seemed to be Mexicans, except for a little Japanese opposite, hardly more than a boy, whose hands twitched nervously as he dealt, and the man whose back was directly turned to the crevice in the rice sacks. It was impossible to see his face, but he was probably a Mexican also, for the rather long hair which escaped beneath his hat was greasy black, and occasionally he spoke in what might have been guttural Spanish. Presently Bob forgot about his face in the fascination of watching the game. The man whose back was toward him was losing, slowly, consistently in small amounts. He seemed to take his losses impassively, with a flick of one shoulder in reply to the exclamations of the others.

Then his luck changed. He began to win, little stakes at first, which grew larger. The pile of bills and coins before him was growing; some of it he slipped into his trouser pocket. They were not playing with chips. The curses of the players grew more audible; they leaned forward to grab their cards in the intensity of their excitement.

Placed in such a position that he could look into the hand of the man whose back was to him, Bob watched curiously. He had never seen such cards. When the man dealt to himself he overtopped the next highest man by just sufficient margin to win. It happened again and again. Once when there was a fair sized jack pot on the table the man drew a third king to the pair of them already in his hand, and to Bob's astonishment cast the whole hand into the discard with a little movement of disgust, permitting his neighbor to win on two pairs.

It was incredible! One man had drawn four cards, all the others three. On the one hand where he might be reasonably sure to win this man had thrown down. And then Bob understood. He was a card sharp. His discarding of a winning hand was a gesture designed to lull any rising suspicions. It must be so. Yet peer as he would Bob was unable to detect a sign of false carding in the muscular brown hands when they dealt. Once, however, in a broken flush, while he looked, the red card miraculously disappeared and a black card took its place, completing the color. The man *was* a crook.

A few minutes later something happened, just what Bob could not see. Whether the subtle hands had made a slip, or whether the losers were watching more carefully it was impossible to tell. Suddenly the Japanese boy, with a screeching sound of fury like an animal at death grips, flung himself across the chest, one yellow hand clawing at the brown one of the dealer, the other raised simultaneously to the man's throat while his extended body crushed the cards and scattered the money about the floor.

At the cry men rolled from their bunks and came running; some one struck at a swinging lamp, and extinguishing it, the oil falling in a slippery pool in which men collided and fell. No one knew what had

happened. There were hoarse shouts and the sound of hard fists striking on flesh. A shrill voice was screaming that he had been robbed. The laborers ran this way and that seeking the thieves, crying out harsh oaths in a half dozen tongues.

A great red-bearded man, feeling for the little sack of money tied about his waist, and for the moment unable to find it, went suddenly mad and plowed through the mass of fallen men, his hobnailed boots stamping on their unprotected bodies, their shrieks of agony rising above the uproar. The Chinese boss of the contract laborers had climbed on a table, his fat face flabby with fear, and with an automatic, whipped from his belt, in his hand, waited, silent, uncertain what to do.

The Japanese boy made no sound. His hand had reached the throat of the gambler and the fingers pressed into the neck, tighter and tighter. The man's face grew purple as his wind was cut off and he rained frantic blows on the boy who buried his head in the abdomen of the other in an effort to avoid them. But the fingers did not relax. Slowly, inexorably they tightened, forcing back the Mexican when he attempted to rise and fling himself free from this thing which, like a creeping vengeance, had swarmed up over his body, and struck.

He was growing weak. Now his eyeballs protruded, and his lips bared his yellow teeth in a desperate grin. Suddenly his right hand ceased flailing futile blows on the bent head beneath him, and flashed to his side. It came up gripping a knife, a slim stiletto-like thing which gleamed as it rose in an arc, halted for a moment in mid-air, and started its downward plunge toward the unprotected back of the Japanese boy.

From behind him, from nowhere as it seemed, another arm shot out and caught the knife hand, arresting its motion with straining muscles and bending it backward away from its victim. Slowly the Mexican's arm was twisted until the knife dropped from his hand and his arm, bent almost straight back, overbalanced him and he fell against the rice bags. The tearing fingers fell away from his throat, leaving long, crimson marks in the flesh, but the Japanese

boy no longer sought to reach the man. As if his slight strength had been exhausted, he lay prostrate across the sea chest, his body shaken with gasping, whistling sobs.

The other players stood staring, and then started uncertainly toward the gambler, who lay in a crumpled heap with half closed eyes, his breast rising and falling painfully to the great gulps of life-giving air he took in.

There might be murder yet, and he had been discovered, anyway. Bob flung away one of the rice sacks and stepped out, catching up a chair and placing himself before the Mexican. But at sight of him the men gave back, staring in astonishment at his clothes, dusted white with powdered rice, and his face streaked and smudged with dirt. Then one of them connected him with the hand that had caught the Mexican's knife.

"By golly, a stowaway!" he cried.

Quickly the room fell silent. Men ceased pummeling one another in blind rage. The red-bearded man, his money found, stumbled about helping his erstwhile victims to their feet, and exclaiming with maudlin sympathy over their bruises. The Chinese contractor climbed down from his table and made his way to Bob's side, the revolver clutched in his hand.

"Good work," he whispered in commendation. "I can manage 'em now."

He turned to the room, and his voice snarled.

"Get to work there and clean up this hold. You damn fools, I'll give you something to fight for! We don't want an inspection by the captain; he'll put half of you in irons! Throw this boy in his bunk." His foot touched the Japanese lying across the sea chest. "Douse a pail of water on the greaser; he's all right. By Heaven, do you have to fight the first day out?"

Some one laughed. After all it was only a scrap; there would be others before the ship landed. Amiably enough, their passions for the moment exhausted, the men set to work clearing away the damage they had done.

The Chinese boss turned to Bob.

"And now what the hell are you doing here? A stowaway thinkin' he'll get a free

trip an' no work, eh? Well, you won't! You'll work every inch of your passage up, an' every inch of it back. See?"

The words were sharp, but his voice was quiet enough; indeed it held an almost friendly respect. This stranger had saved him an unpleasant situation. It wouldn't do at all to have the men murdering one another before the voyage was well begun.

IV.

THE fourth day out the Sea Urchin ran into evil weather. Maddening head winds caught and held her in a choppy sea; winds which veered suddenly in an hour's time, throwing the ship off her course and impeding her progress. Among the men there was muttering and shaking of heads. At dawn the day of sailing, off the Farralone Islands, the gulls, circling in great white arcs across the sky, had avoided the vessel, flying fast in zooming dips in the opposite direction, and ignoring the garbage flung over the side. It was ominous, said those who had made the trip before. When the birds deserted a ship this early it could be taken as a portent of disaster.

To Bob Downes the delay, exasperating as it was to captain and crew and the laborers housed in their cramped quarters, came as a distinct relief. As the days drifted by, cloud riven and foam flecked, he gradually recovered some of his composure. For one thing, this idling in the sea lanes meant freedom from pursuit. He had assured himself by discreet questions that the chance of his being taken off by another vessel was unlikely. For another thing, it meant that he was getting food—food in sufficient and sustaining quantities to remove the specter of starvation from his mind. It was no light thing. Too often in the last months he had gone to sleep with an uneasy, gnawing sensation in his belly not to sit down to the daily bowls of rice and canned corn beef, monotonous as it was, with something like gratitude.

As his composure returned, his memory of the last night in San Francisco faded. It was hazy at best. Now it became unbelievable—a nightmare from which he would presently awake to find himself a

free man, cleared from the stigma of murder. Patiently, like a child committing something to memory, he reviewed again and again the events leading up to his flight.

He had been walking along a street, the name of which he did not even know—near the water, at any rate. He had been cold, hungry, rather more cold than hungry, and he had wanted a drink. There had been the saloon, the people in it; he remembered them distinctly enough. A big woman had talked to him; there had been a black-browed young man who was going to get him a job. Then drinks; he had a vague recollection of talking loudly, saying too much as the liquor warmed him.

What had they talked about? Mists had swept over him; there had been a sudden, giddy nausea through which it seemed that some one had struck him. For what? Then the clearing of his stupor, and before him the body of the man—dead—his fresh blood seeping into the sawdust. There was more than that; there must be. Some cause. Tirelessly his brain recommenced its review.

It was well enough, this tossing about on the gray white waters, but there must be an end to it. To him, as to the other men, the waste of days became monotonous. There was a monotony about everything—the weather, the ship, the food—even that. If there had been a place to exercise, it would have been easier, but the narrow poop deck permitted no extended excursions, and the rest of the ship was forbidden.

There was nothing to read except a few worn newspapers and magazines, and among the men in the hold not one who could give him the companionship he craved. They were, he decided, pretty much like hogs, wallowing in their own filth, which was not all physical. Day after day they lay in their bunks, snoring, grunting, rising only at intervals for food and their interminable games of cards. Even these were barred to him—he had no money.

The Mexican gambler also sat apart, brooding to himself, and avoided by the men. That was the only sign left that the fight was remembered. Indeed, there had

been a dozen since. The Japanese boy had attached himself to Bob with silent fidelity, squatting by his side on the poop deck without a word for long hours, while he shivered in his thin garments. His name, Bob found, was Jimmy Sunyama; at least it sounded like that.

Somehow it pleased him to have the boy's companionship; here, he thought, was one person who would be indifferent to his past, for Jimmy's whole-hearted and nearly successful attempt on the Mexican showed that he felt not the least repugnance at murder. He said so, in his broken English, naively suggesting that it was the easiest way to turn enemies into friends—forever.

Fifteen days, twenty, twenty-five passed, and they should have arrived at Unimak Pass, the middle stage of their journey. But still the baffling weather held; now flat calm, now raging waves that crashed down upon the bark, buffeting her until she strained and trembled. At last on the twenty-ninth day at eight bells of the morning watch the lookout brought them scrambling to the deck for their first sight of land.

Unimak Pass, that long body of water connecting the North Pacific with Bering Sea, opened before them. Bleak shores rose to the right of the water lane, gray masses of heavily lichened, crumbling rock which sheered up from the narrow beach into fantastic pinnacles of tortured stone, volcanic in origin and contorted with the pressure it had undergone when flung up from the sea bottom uncounted ages ago. Above it in the distance loomed Mount Moses, for all the world like a giant ice cream cone, its sides dimly seen through the morning haze, covered with the unmelted snows of winter.

To the left was a network of innumerable small islands, sometimes connected by ridges of rock rising from the water, more often separate, but with too narrow a passage between to permit any but the smallest boat to get through. The larger ones were covered with low scrubs, dreary brown this time of year, and the smaller ones were just broken rock surface. All were deserted as far as the eye could see, except for the birds which circled above

them with cries, hovering above their breeding places.

On this depressing vista Bob stared with something of despair. If this was Alaska, if this was the place in which he was to find sanctuary, it were better that he returned to San Francisco to-morrow, were that possible, and accept with what courage he could muster the penalty for his crime. Accustomed to the life of cities, knowing only the congestion of the East, this horrible, barren land with no sign of human creatures, stretching endlessly in its hideousness, filled him with revulsion. Here he could not live a year. Live? Exist, rather. It meant mental starvation, deprivation of all he had hoped some day to attain. In six months, no, not that long, he would be quite mad, he told himself.

Jimmy Sunyama, standing beside him on the poop deck, sensed his depression. "It will be better beyond, honorable," he said gently, pointing through the Pass. "Soon we go through."

A feeling of quick shame flooded Bob. Here was this Oriental, a child in years, from a country in which such a land was unimaginable, and he had the courage, the determination to smile and point beyond. But Jimmy was wrong; they did not soon go through the Pass. Once again the wind changed, and for three days the Sea Urchin idled on the outside. The Pass, thirty miles long, and varying in width from a half to two miles, could not be negotiated except with a fair wind. To attempt it, otherwise, meant disaster on the rocky shores.

The men in sight of their goal took the delay moodily or in blind rage. Again and again knives were flashed among the Mexicans and Portuguese, and a bloody fight between two Swedes sent one to the sick bay with a broken arm, his face battered into an unrecognizable pulp.

Only the Chinese remained unemotional. Every morning and evening they crowded the poop deck, burning joss sticks and tossing streamers of red paper over the sides, while they prayed for a wind which should take them through.

It was time the voyage was over. The stench in the hold where one hundred and

thirty unwashed men lived, slept and ate was unbelievable. Bob obtained permission from the Chinese contractor to remain on deck until late in the night. That was endurable in spite of the cold.

On the third day the prayers of the yellow men were answered, and a fair wind sprang up directly astern. With her mainsails, topsails, gallants and royals billowing to the welcome breeze, with her bow dipping and the spume swirling up in clouds over her figurehead, the Sea Urchin scudded forward to enter the Pass. The contract laborers crowded up from their hold to the narrow poop deck reserved for them; the other laborers from the forecastle astern. Scraps of song, shouts, gay scuffling echoed along the decks. The confined men saw their voyage almost ended; with fair winds they should reach the salmon fisheries in another four or five days. Even the Chinese became blandly optimistic, confident in the efficacy of their joss and red paper.

For fifteen knots all went well, the Sea Urchin bowling along at an easy clip through the Pass, whose barren rock walls became ever steeper. Then the wind died. Suddenly, as if a fog had blanketed it, although the day remained bright, it dropped to a whisper of a breeze, and then nothing. The ship lost headway, caught in stays, and began to drift. In desperation the captain ordered more sail broken out. Spanker, gaff-topsail and ring-tail were flung from the mizzenmast, to remain sagging heavily, motionless.

Slowly, inevitably, the Sea Urchin began to drift toward the lee shore. At most it was only half a mile distant, the Pass itself not much over a mile wide. To the landsmen it was a curious phenomenon; there had been wind, and then it had left them. Beyond this they did not understand. The sailors, however, did. An anchor was dropped; it dragged, hardly impeding the drift. Another was flung overside, but seldom used, the defective chain parted and it was lost. Now men were preparing the lifeboats, throwing in extra oars and fixing the rowlocks.

The shore was strangely near; in a few minutes it had moved toward them, or so

it seemed. From a distance it had been harmless enough, but closer the ledges became jagged rocks; the line of white which from midchannel had seemed an edging of foam became breakers, flinging themselves forward with uneasy roars and receding again to gather for a fresh onslaught.

A low, scraping sound was followed by a grinding bump. The ship had struck. Slowly the deck began to tilt up and up until it seemed as though the sailors hurrying to and fro had each a leg shorter than the other. Even then the men remained quiet. It was an adventure, exciting enough, but not dangerous. Perhaps the ship would float free. That little bump could not have hurt her.

A Chinaman began burning joss sticks again on the poop deck. It arose, a smudge in the still air. Suddenly it seemed as though it had been joined by a dozen other little streamers of smoke rising from nowhere, drifting lazily upward. A man burst from one of the hatches, stripped to the waist, his eyes wild. His cry was a wail of sheer terror:

"Fire! Fire! The damn boat's burning!"

Then panic broke loose. Men plunged down in the forecastle to get their belongings, and rushed again to the deck, choking and gasping. A mad crowd began milling frantically about, cursing and screaming their fear, fighting their way to the lifeboats that they could not launch. All order was forgotten in the clouds of smoke which rose in ever increasing thickness.

Swept aside in the stampede, Bob found himself pressed up against the mainmast and clinging to the halyards for support. A sailor was beside him. This was the first time he had spoken to one. He was glad that at least the man was white.

"How could we catch fire so quickly?" he asked. And then: "Is there any danger?"

"Acid," said the sailor briefly, and turned to go.

The man brushed him off with contempt. This was one of those ignorant contract laborers.

"Muriatic acid," he explained. "The

hold's full of it to use in sealing the salmon tins, an' the pounding has busted one of the carboys. It burns like hell. Good-by to the old Sea Urchin! Let go! I got to work. These damn wops—" He was off into the crowd, trying to stem the tide, striking out from his great shoulders with heavy fists, hoarsely bawling orders.

For a moment more Bob watched the frenzied mob. Bundles were dropped and scattered on the deck. A Chinaman had flung away a cage of white rats, which, breaking, had let the creatures loose. They fled this way and that, squealing their terror, and crushed to death beneath stamping, ruthless feet. A lifeboat dropped from its davits and was splintered on the rocks below. The captain was advancing now along the deck, revolver in hand, flanked by the first and second mates. In the uproar his booming orders were unheard. Deliberately he fired into the mob of men, then again. Two figures dropped. The yellow men and Mexicans, startled by the bodies at their feet, paused for a moment.

A feeling of shame came to Bob. After all, he was white, too. Like the sailor, he had work to do. With an oath he caught up an iron belaying pin and pressed forward into the crowd.

Most of the men recognized him, gathering reassurance as he called out that there was no danger, forcing them back from the rail, striking savagely at those whose panic had blinded them. The captain's voice could be heard now, bellowing orders as he relentlessly forced the men along the deck. Some semblance of order was restored. Rapidly the lifeboats were manned and sent shoreward; it was only a hundred yards, and the boats, heavily loaded, began to clear the ship. But in spite of the speed tongues of flame had begun to creep from the hatches before the work was finished. The officers, some sailors, a dozen Swedes and Bob were the last to leave. With the deck scorching beneath their feet, their eyes bloodshot and blinded from the fumes, they flung themselves overside and swam until their feet touched bottom.

As if in mockery, the vanished wind sprang up again, whistling and hooting through the Sea Urchin's spars, and fed the

fires below. Within a half hour the ship was a furnace, her sails great bursts of flame one moment, blackened shreds the next, the rigging outlined in livid tongues as the fire ran up it. A mast crashed; pieces of wood, charred and smoldering, dropped into the water, and were swept to shore.

The captain reassured the men gathered about him. The loss of his ship was a bitter blow, a blow from which he might never recover, but from his impassive face no one would have known it. No, there was no danger now. There were settlements of sorts in the interior, not far from the coast. The burning ship would bring people to take care of them. Also there were revenue cutters cruising in the vicinity. They would know what had happened. Such a smoke could be seen a long distance at sea.

In a few days at most the cutters would take them off, and they would all be returned to San Francisco. He regretted the two men he had been obliged to shoot. With the exception of one man drowned in the falling lifeboat, they were the only casualties. This was to be taken as a warning that discipline would be maintained. He tapped the revolver significantly. In the meantime the men were to stay together and obey orders. A party had already been sent inland with news of their disaster.

To Bob the announcement that they were to be returned to San Francisco came as an appalling blow. It seemed as though the fingers of the dead man were reaching forth even into these northern wastes to draw him back to justice. All his old fears of the first two weeks of the voyage swept over him again. He settled into quiet despair; there was no escape. These leagues and leagues of water which he had put between them were as nothing. At the caprice of so slight a thing as a vagrant wind he had been flung back on his doom. It seemed to him to be that.

Now that the opportunity to return and face the worst had come, all his old fears arose, doubts as to his own courage, a weakness which he feared was fundamental. Sitting alone, apart from the men he had so

recently helped to quell, he sought to face the situation with such fortitude as he might find. There was a ray of hope; if the old woman in the saloon had kept faith, if even the body of the man had not been found, there might be a chance of getting ashore and disappearing. If, however, something had gone wrong, the attention of the police would surely be centered on the returning laborers. As a stowaway he would be open to marked suspicion.

Toward evening the wind, which had been blowing strongly, dropped somewhat, and as it did so another ship entered the Pass, her white sails flapping and billowing as she sought to make the passage so lately denied the Sea Urchin. A wild thought was born in Bob's brain. This was evidently another of the salmon company's fleet; daily now they were leaving San Francisco. If he could by some means get aboard her he might even yet reach the wilds of Alaska and safety.

The men from the burned ship had scattered for miles along the beach. Near by a lifeboat lay half drawn out of water, unguarded. Without considering the risk, indifferent to the curious stares of a few men close by, he managed to launch the boat and began tugging at the oars. It was unwieldy, and he made little progress, but, the tide suddenly catching him, he was swept out toward mid-channel.

The men on shore began to shout at him, but, glancing back, he saw that they were not attempting pursuit. After all, they were not of the crew, and their sense of responsibility was slight. Already they were growing smaller, like manikins, he thought, hopping up and down, waving their arms absurdly. He stifled an impulse to laugh, and bent again to the oars.

The ship was approaching slowly, majestically. He pulled harder, wondering if he would reach her. And then he found the lifeboat was leaking. Evidently it had been damaged in one of the landings. He was unable to keep the bow steady. It sagged and veered in spite of his efforts. The water, which had at first seemed a gentle trickle, was now flowing in spurts through several seams. Bob tried to turn the boat toward shore. It refused to obey him.

The icy water rose to his ankles, crept toward his knees. The ship loomed higher now; he would be unable to make the distance which still separated them. Standing unsteadily, feet apart, he called wildly, waving the coat he had torn from his back, knowing as he did so the futility of it. The ship could not stop. To put to for a moment meant the risk of piling on the shore with the Sea Urchin, still burning fiercely.

And then a cross current caught the sinking boat and began tossing it almost directly across the path of the approaching ship. The light was failing, and he shouted again, hoping the men on deck might hear him. The great bow seemed directly over him. He closed his eyes for a moment, awaiting the crash as it struck his half submerged boat. When he opened them the side of the vessel was slipping past. Above him a blur of white faces peered down. Beneath his feet the boat was tottering, bucking forward with short jerks. A wave splashed over the side. They were going past—letting him drown.

From above a line flung out, dropped across the thwarts. With the lifeboat swamping beneath his feet, Bob caught at the buoy attached to it. There was a tug that wrenched his arms, then he plunged into the water. Again to the agony of straining tendons he was drawn to the surface. The ship heeled slightly, and he plunged again. Now they were drawing him up the side. It seemed immeasurably far. The icy water had numbed his blood, chilling him to the bone; his fingers refused to close—slowly, surely they were slipping down the rope. In an agony of desperation he set his teeth in it.

The faces loomed up again, suddenly near. Hands had reached out and had grasped him, were dragging him over the rail. The light was fading, fading swiftly into an approaching wall of blackness. As he lost consciousness Bob Downes stared up into the face of the man he had murdered in San Francisco!

V.

It was three days later before Bob was able to leave his bunk; the exhaustion and

excitement of his escape from the burning Sea Urchin, followed by his exposure twice that day in the chill waters of Unimak, had left him weakened with a dull fever that burned fitfully. The memory of the face he had seen remained with him like a bad dream, for which he was unable to account. Some chance resemblance, he thought, or at least only a hallucination passing in his tortured brain of the thing which weighed most heavily on him. Nevertheless when he was able to climb on deck he looked eagerly about for some sign of the man who had bent over him with the others, but there was nobody in sight who looked at all like the dead Buddy Ryan.

The ship was another of the Northern Waters Salmon Company's fleet—the Isabelle. Brought before the first mate, Bob was bitterly characterized as an ignorant fool for his attempt to board the bark, and then to his relief little more was said. Within a day or so the ship would make a landing, the end of the long voyage was in sight, and all was confusion and preparation.

One small bit of luck he had. It was taken for granted that he was a laborer from the Sea Urchin who had duly signed up for the trip, so with the stigma of stow-away removed there was no risk of his being returned to San Francisco before the end of the fishing season.

At last with her white sails drooping, sliding smoothly forward to her anchorage, the Isabelle came to rest in Bristol Bay. The men were disembarked and loaded on lighters for their journey up the river. As they crept slowly along the banks, picking a tortuous channel through sandbars and submerged obstructions, Bob studied the country curiously.

It stretched away into the haze of distance, thousands of little lakes seeming to run into one another in the flat land on which grew masses of low scrub, gray green except where it was brightened by patches of salmon berries ripening slowly in the pale sunlight. Later clouds of wild duck would feed on them, rising as the men passed, with soft whirring of wings and harsh cries. Now it was deserted, unutterably lonely. Again depression settled on Bob. It was no fit country for white men.

Better leave it to the Indians who stared at them silently as they passed.

Once the camp was reached, however, there was no time for reflections of any sort. Crews of men were already at work preparing for the run of fish. Their arrival was greeted with demands for the latest news from home, then all turned again to the business in hand. Predictions were made that the season would be a big one. They were assigned bunkhouses, the canneries were being put in order, and then, almost immediately it seemed, the fish began to run.

Great schools of flopping salmon, struggling up stream, fighting their way past obstacles, obeying the primal impulse to spawn and die, they swept into the river mouth. Again and again the seines were filled with fish, which were lifted on shore, cleaned, sealed in cans and then cooked in a retort. To Bob came wonder that there should be such uncounted thousands of them.

He had been given a job at the "Iron Chink," as it was called; a machine into which he fed fish that came out again, heads and tails cut off and miraculously cleaned. It was back-breaking work; his hands became raw and then ulcered from handling the smooth silver bodies, and the stench of decaying fish poisoned the air for miles around. In the next cove, the next river, and far beyond up the coast men were doing the same things—catching fish, killing them, working and sweating in an atmosphere of putrefaction.

As Bob's muscles hardened to the task a certain grim satisfaction came to him. At least he was working; that, and the relief of having escaped from the net of the law filled his thoughts. The murder in the saloon seemed farther away than ever. Sometimes he sought to analyze his emotions. He did not feel like a murderer. The thought that later he might be held accountable for the crime left him numb. It was so unbelievable that at last he began to deny it to himself. If he had only the slightest perception of guilt— Surely there must be some extenuating circumstances.

He wished now that he had remained and faced the thing, or had at least ob-

tained a statement from the old man and the woman as to the cause of it all. But he knew that, confronted with the same situation, bewildered and intoxicated, he would have done the same thing—fled to the nearest refuge that offered. No, he was better off here in spite of the fatigue and the monotony. Alone in San Francisco, without money or influence, he would not have a chance.

This attitude of mind surprised him vaguely. During the first week in the fisheries he would gladly have gone back, had that been possible, rather than endure another day's toil at the Iron Chink. Several times he caught himself whistling at his work and stopped abruptly. It seemed somehow indecent for a man who had recently taken human life to be happy.

From time to time Bob searched among the men for the face, seen so vaguely on shipboard, which had strangely resembled that of his victim, but he did not find it. It might be possible, of course, that the man was located in another camp, or, even, that he might not have happened to come in contact with him among the hundreds on this river, but he was inclined to believe that it had been a half delirious fancy, and that the man, could he see him now, would in no way resemble the dead Ryan.

Work had been finished one night and Bob was lying on his bunk in the bunk-house listening idly to the talk of the men about him. It had been a heavy day and already an occasional snore sounded in a far corner of the room.

"The season's more than half over," said one of the men, an old-timer who had been up for three seasons.

"The fish are still running strong," objected another. "I don't see no slack yet."

"Well, it is," answered the first man. "The run won't last beyond the 25th of July; it never does. Watch the sea gulls, too. When we first come they fed off the fish guts; now they're so particular they don't pick at nothin' but the eyes. They won't, neither, from now on."

A noise interrupted him; a roaring sound punctuated with piercing yells. There was a shuffling of feet, as though a large body of men were struggling about aimlessly.

"Good God, what's that?" cried somebody.

Men straightened up in their bunks, listening.

The door of the bunk house burst open. One of the Chinese cooks flung himself in and slammed the door, his yellow skin wet with perspiration, his slant eyes wide with terror.

"Big gang down the river plenty drunk, come lick the camp," he chattered. "They got Long Sam, toss him in blanket, some one kick in his face."

"They did, did they?" boomed one of the men. "Come on, we'll clean up this bunch!"

Sleep vanished, the men piled out of the bunk house, grabbing up any weapon at hand—sticks, stones, while one man thoughtfully remained to break up the wooden seats along the walls for additional ammunition. Bob found himself in the front line of the mob. At the other end of the camp a body of men could be seen dimly in the darkness, struggling about some object, and already a few isolated fights were in progress between the invading laborers and those men who had been caught unaware by their coming.

This was an old game between the rival fishing camps. Almost every season one or the other, inflamed with bad whisky, and bored by the endless monotony of the work, broke out and carried the war into the neighboring territory. The foremen were inclined to let them fight out their differences; indeed, there was no practical way of stopping them, and next day those able to be about worked harder.

The men had now met with a jarring crash of bodies and whirling fists. Cries, grunts, muttered curses rose above the stamping of feet in the dust-filled air. Staves were brought down with resounding cracks on backs and shoulders, while from the outskirts of the crowd stones were flung. No one could distinguish whom he was fighting; bunkmates were locked in a crushing embrace until a gasped word betrayed the presence of a friend.

Then some one flung a half dozen benches together and poured a can of kerosene over them. The suddenly leaping flames filled

the night with red light, outlining the struggling mass.

Bob found himself pressed against the hairy chest of a giant who shuffled from foot to foot like a swaying elephant, seeking always to fling up his knee in the deadly crotch blow which would knock out his antagonist. Slowly Bob worked his hand up through the pinioning arms until his free fingers touched the bearded face. Then with a lightning movement his hand flashed in and the thumb locked in the man's mouth, pressed out from the menace of biting teeth.

His fingers settled about the back of the neck for a lever, and slowly, relentlessly he began to pull, stretching, tearing until it seemed as though the very flesh and sinews would be shredded beneath his grasp. The other man endured it grimly until his mouth had been drawn almost to his ear, then with a shriek of agony he flung Bob from him against a group of fighters and fled.

The battle was nearly over. In twos and threes the attackers broke from the punishment being inflicted on them and ran into the darkness, pursued by stones, catcalls and some of the more vengeful, not yet satisfied. Bob crawled painfully to his feet and leaned against a tree. He had been shaken and crushed until every muscle ached. A stone had glanced off his forehead and the taste of blood was salty in his mouth. The laborers were returning from the chase, exulting in their victory. Already bottles of whisky were being passed from hand to hand in celebration of it. A table was piled on the fire.

At this moment the door of one of the bunk houses opened cautiously and a figure stepped out. Pressing close to the wall, it managed to reach the end of the building unseen. Then some one shouted. The man crouched, saw he was discovered, sprang out to run, tripped against something, and fell. In a moment the mob was on him. There was some laughter and cries of "Toss *him* in a blanket like Long Sam," which suddenly turned to yells of rage.

"He's been robbing the bunks!"

From the pockets of the cowering creature were pulled forth a dozen watches, a wad of

money, some trifles in silver, keepsakes of the men. Swiftly the temper of the crowd changed. In that moment they became blood hungry.

"That's my watch!"

"He's cleaned us out!"

"Hang the scoundrel!"

These changed to the ever-rising, constantly repeated:

"Get a rope! Get a rope! Get a rope!"

It became monotonous in its terrifying sameness.

Gibbering his terror, with flecks of saliva staining his lips, the man was dragged toward the tree under which Bob stood. Powerless to prevent what was about to happen, and sickened by it, Bob stepped back. A rope was brought from somewhere. At that moment the crowd opened up and Bob stared into the face of the man who was about to be lynched. In the contorted, panic-stricken features, drained of blood, he recognized the man he had last seen on shipboard, the man who had drunk with him in the saloon, and whom he had later seen lying knifed at his feet.

His senses reeled, and he flung a hand against the tree for support. His mouth opened, but no words came. In a moment it would be too late. Already the rope was being looped about the man's neck. The crowd was closing in.

"Wait!" he cried. "Wait!"

It seemed as though no one had heard him. Gathering himself desperately, he caught the nearest man and flung him into the crowd. A menacing growl arose. But he had caught their attention. His voice rose clear, passionate, dominating them for just a moment.

"I killed this man in Frisco six weeks ago!"

He held them at last. Silenced, the men gave back. Some of the Mexicans crossed themselves. The Chinese, bland, entertained by the oddities of white men, pressed forward to listen. Ignoring them, Bob seized the trembling Juan by his shirt and pulled him forward until their faces almost touched.

"Buddy Ryan," he cried, his voice thick, "I want to know the truth!"

At the sound of that name Juan became

even more terrified. His knees bent under him and a low moan like an animal in pain came from his throat. It was evident that he recognized it. But he shook his head.

"Tell me," ordered Bob, and the simple words sounded terrible in their ferocity. His hands tightened on Juan's shoulders until his nails bit into the flesh.

"My name is Juan Perez," he muttered.

"Your name was Ryan that night. Come clean, damn you!"

Dumbly Juan shook his head.

Bob looked over the Mexican's shoulder as the crowd pressed forward.

"Hang him!" he said quietly.

The men made an uneasy movement. Juan fell to his knees. San Francisco was a long way off. There would be a trial, and lawyers—delays—a chance perhaps to escape somehow. Here in the Alaskan night the rope dangled for him, waiting.

"No, no! Stop them. I'll tell," he gasped. "I killed Ryan!"

Slowly, with pauses and broken words he told of the plot to incriminate the first stranger to enter the saloon. Harsh murmurs rose from the fishermen. One might kill, but it was bad ethics to frame another for it. Juan had finished his story. His fingers picked nervously at his belt. He was a doomed man, and he knew it.

"That is the truth," he said hoarsely. "Now take me away from here."

"Why did you come up here to Alaska?" he asked.

Juan stopped fumbling with his belt.

"I forgot. You do not know. That night my mother, the Calla Lily, was found dead on the floor. She had died of an apoplexy, the doctor said, while drunk. My alibi was weak and I was afraid—afraid of old Pete the barkeep. He hated me, anyway, and with the Lily dead he might squeal. They had him in jail on suspicion. And so I took the first boat north—to this."

He spread his hands in a gesture of resignation.

"An' spoiled your chances by stealin', you damn rat!" said a Swede contemptuously.

"My father was Perez, a Mexican," Juan said. "We Perez do not steal—for

the stealing. But the end of the trip is near and I had to have money. With money I could live for a long time among the Indians. They might even help me to escape. For that reason I took your money, Swede!"

He spit the word from him like an epithet.

"Hang him!" cried some one in the background, but it sounded half-hearted.

"There'll be no hanging to-night," said a cool voice.

The manager of the Northern Waters Salmon Company stepped into the light, the doctor and a couple of foremen behind him.

"We'll take this man in charge," he continued pleasantly. "There's a nice empty room with some handcuffs waiting him. The rest of you men turn in. You don't think we're going to give up fishing for a little thing like murder, do you?"

The fire had died down; one by one the men turned toward the bunk houses.

The manager spoke to Bob.

"You're to be congratulated—and thanked. Before I could have stopped them our friend here would have been strung up as high as Haman. That's a bad thing. A ship is going back in a few days and we'll send this man on it. You can go, too. I will see that the company expresses its thanks in Frisco with something substantial over and above your pay."

"Do I have to go?" asked Bob.

"Why, no," answered the manager in some surprise. "Nobody wants him in Frisco, do they?" He turned to Juan.

Juan shrugged sullenly.

"Why should they? With the Lily dead who was there to tell about him? The police never heard of him."

"Just so," said the manager. "Go or stay. I rather thought from watching you that you'd be glad to cut out."

Bob stared out into the soft night. The water was lapping against the fish dock; in the distance the Iron Chink loomed; beyond, over the marshes a myriad of mosquitoes swarmed with faint humming. Soon the dawn would come, and with it the ducks, whirring across the flat lands to eat the salmon berries. The work was hard, and he thought he hated it, but—

"I guess I'll stay," he said.

THE END.



A Million to One Chance

By **ELIZABETH YORK MILLER**

Author of "The Ledbury Fist," "The Greatest Gamble," etc.

WHAT HAS OCCURRED IN PART I.

CAROL BEAUFORT, twenty-one-year-old English heiress, doubly an orphan through her mother's disappearance and her father's death, becomes engaged to John Kennard, a handsome man of thirty-eight. Her relatives fear he is a fortune hunter, but word comes from Cape Town that he is a gentleman of fine family. Actually, however, he is a cousin of the real John Kennard, and his right name is Hugh Lloyd. Moreover, his wife had been murdered back in South Africa and he barely had escaped a verdict of guilty. Now, the genuine Kennard reaches London, and Lloyd urges him to keep his secret and be his best man. The day before the wedding Mrs. Sybil Carey, an artist, attempts to persuade Carol not to marry the unworthy "Kennard," but the girl thinks the woman is insane. Mrs. Carey really is Carol's mother, and to save her child she lures Kennard to her home and locks him in a room. At the church the deserted bride is persuaded to accept the real Jack Kennard as the bridegroom. When Mrs. Carey returns to her home to liberate Lloyd she finds him dead, apparently the victim of murder.

CHAPTER X.

A SILENT PLEDGE.

THE one really magnificent figure at Carol's wedding was Colonel Beaufort. He had an answer for everybody. He was a rather terrible old man,

was Uncle Jim. He cared nothing for lies, and would have practiced a much greater deception than the mere quibble the license involved, had it been necessary. The only thing he really cared about was saving a scandal.

There was something very gallant in the

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way he put it. The Beauforts had always distinguished themselves in the long departed days of romance, he said. There was the one who had eloped to Gretna Green and got well over the border with her lover husband before the outraged parents of them both had an inkling of what was afoot.

And there was the one—also a girl—who had driven in a great traveling carriage all the way from Paris to Rome, chaperoned by one adorer and his mother, in order to meet and marry the man of her real choice. They had been desperate young women for their demure times.

As for the men of the family—there were too many tales about them for casual recital.

Uncle Jim haw-hawed his way through the ensuing festivities with a confidence that inspired belief. Even his sister, the sharp-eyed Miss Pamela, believed the story he had contrived on the spur of the moment. She felt that she could never forgive him nor trust him again for his part in the deception.

Like all romantic tales, it was essentially simple. Just the story of a girl who had discovered when it was almost too late that her heart was given to another man. She had fallen in love with a relative of the bridegroom named on the invitations. The ordinary way would have been to recall those invitations and postpone the wedding.

But that, said Uncle Jim, was not the Beaufort way. Naughty child—she had kept quiet up to the very last moment. Then, the expected bridegroom having been warned off, the man she really loved produced his license, and in spite of the natural objections of Carol's relatives—to wit, of himself—the wedding had taken place. It was all most "romantic."

Carol found it hard to live up to this story. It was immensely difficult in every way. There was only one thing she wanted in this world, and that was to go off into a corner by herself, draw down the shutters, and if not exactly die, at least feel that no dissecting eye was at work striving to probe her monstrous secret.

She should have been grateful to Uncle Jim, but she had other things against him

which almost outweighed his admirable powers of covering up her indignity. And, of course, she ought to be grateful to Jack Kennard.

Imagine, if possible, that scene. The big house in Grosvenor Square was packed to the very doors. So many more people had come on to the reception than would have called had the dashing element in this last Beaufort wedding been lacking. A large number were relatives or "connections," but there were a great many merely society people, friends of Uncle Jim and Aunt Pam.

From a rather obscure young girl who had kept aloof from her own kind during the six months of her majority Carol sprang into the limelight.

Stories about her mother were recalled. The bridegroom came in for an immense amount of speculation. One didn't know a thing about him, whereas one had known a little about that handsome, middle-aged wastrel who had been Carol's first choice. From one of the colonies? He looked it.

But to the discerning eye, unfortunately rare, Jack Kennard looked even more than something which was not altogether English. He had the troubled consciousness of being a man, and as such his one thought was how to spare, how to save his unhappy bride-by-circumstance from her own humiliation. How, indeed, to save her from himself.

He suspected Mrs. Carey's hand in the affair, but the way in which it had been managed puzzled him sorely. All very well to have stopped the marriage to Hugh Lloyd—it was what he himself had determined to do at the very altar—but why had it been bungled in this absurd fashion?

And Jack had so little time for speculation. Here he was sharing with his unexpected bride in the honors of the occasion. What dreadful things weddings were! Particularly this one. He was stared at and commented upon as something in a zoo.

Uncle Jim had tried to make him a romantic figure, but he felt himself to be ridiculous, while Carol was too pitiful for words. He scarcely dared look at her, but all the time he was acutely conscious of her by his side—the slight, upright figure, with lips that quivered when she smiled, the gleam

of glossy braids under her veil, the gold ring on her finger, the tired droop of her shoulders—of Carol he was most conscious.

Finally, to his intense relief, people began to drift away. There had been a sit-down luncheon in the ballroom, the cake had been cut and distributed, the toasts were over. The bridesmaids and some of the relatives lingered while Carol went upstairs to dress.

Uncle Jim, who thought of everything, sent one of the menservants to Jack's hotel for his luggage, and then for the first time the bridegroom found an opportunity to have a word alone with Carol's most important relative.

They went into the library, a quiet room which had escaped the storm. Colonel Beaufort sank into a chair. He was an oldish man, and the efforts he had put forth to carry off the well-nigh impossible situation had exhausted him.

"Have you any explanation of this?" he asked peevishly.

"Yes," Jack replied. "There was something in my cousin's past life which he feared might come to light."

"His past life? I looked that up. I had Kennard's record investigated, you may be sure. I disliked the man intensely, but unfortunately could find nothing against him—certainly not as regarded the past."

Jack hesitated. However, his duty was quite clear.

"It was my 'past' you investigated," he said dryly. "I haven't got much of a one that I know of."

"Yours?"

"You looked up John Kennard, I suppose. Well, there is only one of us in Cape Town. My cousin's real name is Hugh Lloyd.

"Look here, sir; I'm a very plain chap. I haven't got the polish and all that of the sort of man you'd want your niece to marry. But this thing happened more or less by accident. It just came to me in a flash how to save the day.

"I scarcely expected her to agree, or that you would permit it. You did. Neither of you could face the—er—unpleasantness, and I don't blame you. Well, we're married now. The question is—"

Uncle Jim roused himself. All his arrogance was up in arms at once.

"I don't know anything about you or who you are," he declared. "Of course, it was quite decent of you to do what you did. I'm grateful and all that. The day has been saved, as you put it, and by you. If you have the right instincts, you'll know how to behave.

"After an interval—it need not be a long one—the marriage can be quietly annulled. That was one thing I wanted to speak to you about. There will have to be a pretense of a honeymoon—at least of starting on it.

"But I will meet you anywhere you like and take charge of my niece. I suggest that you motor down to her place in the country, Beaufort Priory, and I will join you there.

"They—she and this scoundrel of a cousin of yours—were to have gone abroad, but that concerns nobody.

"You understand, of course, that I regard this marriage as a pure farce."

Jack Kennard looked at him steadily. There was something determined even to the point of ugliness in the young man's expression.

"I see," he said. "You didn't mind making use of me—"

"My good man, you made the offer yourself!"

"It was a bona fide offer, sir. I will be good to her, and on my sacred word of honor I promise you that she will only become my wife in fact when I have won her love. But you must give me the right to try."

Uncle Jim snorted.

"Nothing of the sort. The girl is only a child. She knows nothing of the world—"

"Yet you were willing enough that she should marry my cousin."

"I was not. I opposed it to the very best of my ability. In this affair, however, Carol will agree with me. Her aunt must talk to her, although the whole thing is most unpleasant—repellent, indeed—to both of us."

It was on the tip of Jack's tongue to ask why not let Carol's own mother talk

to her, if talk were necessary, but he remembered that Sibyl Carey had given him only a half confidence and that with reservations.

The door opened, and the round face of the butler appeared.

"You're wanted on the telephone, sir," he said.

Colonel Beaufort started wearily to respond, but Carson said no, it was Mr. Kennard who was wanted.

When Jack was in the hall Carson vouchsafed the further information that it was a Mrs. Carey who had asked for him. The butler looked almost knowing. Possibly, thought Jack, he was aware of Mrs. Carey's relationship to the bride.

"I've switched you onto the telephone in here, sir," said Carson. Having led Jack through a maze of short corridors, he admitted him to a cozy retreat off the huge pantry. "My sitting room, sir. It will be more private like."

That was superthoughtful of Carson.

Jack thanked him, and the butler withdrew.

"Is that you, Jack?"

He had some difficulty in recognizing the agitated voice that greeted him.

"Yes—Jack Kennard. Are you Mrs. Carey?"

"Yes. Jack, you—you *married* her?"

"It was the only thing to do—and fortunately for me, she agreed. What happened to Hugh? I suppose you threatened him with exposure—"

"No, I— Jack, something *terrible* has happened. I can't possibly tell you over the telephone, but I must see you at once. Do you understand? It is absolutely necessary. I wouldn't ask you if it was not. I have to see you now, *at once*."

"At once?" he repeated. "I don't quite see—"

"Well, within an hour, then. I am nearly out of my mind. I don't know what to do!"

"My dear Mrs. Carey, what can it be—"

"I can't talk any more. Come to my house. Don't try to telephone; it's out of order. Don't fail me. Give me your promise."

"Of course, I'll come—just as soon as I possibly can."

He was puzzled and somewhat alarmed as he hung up the receiver. Mrs. Carey was by no means a hysterical woman; not when he had known her in the old days.

Was it possible that she as well as Colonel Beaufort was going to work herself into a fine frenzy because he had rushed Carol into marriage with him when the girl was certainly not in a state of mind to judge for herself? Even Mrs. Carey must have a poor opinion of him, he thought, if she believed him capable of taking advantage of Carol's helplessness.

It would be very difficult to keep the promise she had forced from him. How could he get away—at *once*?

He went back to the library and found Uncle Jim in possession of a whisky and soda, which no doubt the old man felt he needed.

"Who was it that rang you up? Any news? Was it that scoundrel of a cousin—"

"No," Jack replied briefly. He would need to go cautiously with this old man who appeared to have acquired the bad habit of minding other people's business.

Uncle Jim looked annoyed. He disliked being kept in the dark about the smallest matter.

"As to our plans—" he began.

"I'm awfully sorry, sir, but there really is no argument there. You must give me a chance to get acquainted with my wife." He used the word "wife" deliberately. "The matter is entirely between her and me."

Colonel Beaufort looked down his nose.

"That's ridiculous—"

"Possibly. The whole thing is ridiculous. Meanwhile, I have a few arrangements of my own to make. I have to go out, unfortunately. Can you get rid of the rest of these people? Will it be possible for me to have a word with my wife before I go?"

Uncle Jim was bursting with curiosity and impatience. He wanted to run things in his own way, and that was the conventional way. He had planned to speed the bridal couple in orthodox style; they would motor down to Beaufort Priory and an hour or so later he and Aunt Pam would follow

to take charge of Carol and dismiss the bridegroom, trusting to Jack Kennard's continued gallantry to take himself off quietly somewhere until the noise of the wedding bells had completely died down.

Then they could discuss terms. It might cost Carol as much as twenty thousand pounds to buy the fellow off and get completely out of this, but it would be a good lesson to her.

The feeling between the two men did not improve, but in the end Jack had his way. He could not break his promise to Mrs. Carey, and he meant to have that word alone with Carol before he went.

With great reluctance Uncle Jim allowed a message to be sent to her, and Jack was shown up to the boudoir where he had met her yesterday for the first time in his life.

She had changed into her traveling dress, fawn-colored velvet with deep collar and cuffs of sable, and a fawn-colored hat with a lace veil half thrown back. She was very pale, but quite self-composed.

In a few words Kennard told her what her uncle proposed to do.

"It's for you to say. Would you prefer never to see me again?" he asked.

Carol looked at him mutely.

He was embarrassed, but he stuck to his point.

"We were *married*," he pointed out; "don't forget that. Before God's altar we pledged ourselves as man and wife. In the circumstances, it seems a queer thing to say—but I can't regret it. Not yet.

"I want you to give me a little time. Can't we get to know each other and—and find out if it didn't grow into something bigger? It might."

The girl's lips quivered.

"It was very kind of you," she said. "I must have seemed a dreadful coward. I only—only said 'yes' because I hadn't the moral courage to face the fact that I'd been jilted."

"I don't blame you for that. And I'm mighty glad you did say 'yes.' He wasn't fit to marry you, and Carol, my child, I shouldn't have stood by and allowed it. Perhaps that's why he didn't turn up."

A flash of understanding illumined her somber eyes.

"Then it was true—what that woman said! True about him—that he'd been married before and his first wife had died mysteriously."

"What woman?" Jack asked.

He was deeply mystified when she told him about Mrs. Carey's visit to her late last night, and how afterward she had rung up her lover and been told that the unpleasant story applied to his cousin.

Jack's face was grim enough, you may be sure. He said to himself that if ever he and Hugh Lloyd met again the latter would have reason to wish he had never been born. Also, he realized that, strange as it was, Carol did not know that Sybil Carey was her mother.

"Your uncle shall investigate all this up to the hilt," he said. "But what I want from you is the promise that you'll give me a chance to win your love. Just now, of course, you don't want to think about anything of that sort. You're too bruised and hurt, poor child. But we can be friends."

Timidly Carol gave him her hand. It was her left one, and he bent over it gravely, kissing the finger which carried the wedding ring. She had offered him what he construed to be a silent pledge.

CHAPTER XI.

A KIDNAPED BRIDE.

UNCLE JIM got rid of the remaining guests and relatives by the simple expedient of announcing that the bride and groom had played a joke on them in departing secretly.

Jack changed into a lounge suit and was shown out by a side door. The colonel had not been able to discover why it was he felt obliged to absent himself for an hour at this most critical time, nor could he get any satisfaction afterward from Carson, whom he did not scruple to question. Carson apparently did not know who had rung up Mr. Kennard, whether man, woman, or child.

As a taxicab bore him toward Chelsea, Jack became conscious of a feeling of irritation toward Sybil Carey. Surely she must have realized that, all things considered, this

was the busiest and most complex day of his life.

It might be fatal to leave Carol alone with her uncle and aunt at this moment. It might make all the difference in the world to the future of them both.

A great pity Mrs. Carey couldn't have curbed her curiosity, or impatience, whichever it was. She might have known that he would have communicated with her at the earliest opportunity. But she had wrung the promise from him and he had to go.

As earlier in the day she had opened the door to another man, now she opened it to Kennard, signaling him to dismiss his cab. The stricken look on her face gave him no option but to obey.

"What is the matter?" he asked as she drew him into the hall and, having closed the door, leaned back against the wall as if on the verge of collapse.

"Hugh Lloyd!" she gasped faintly, and pointed down the long tiled passage that led to her studio.

"He's in there—in the studio. I locked him in."

"Oh, I see." Enlightenment came to Jack. "So that's why he didn't turn up? And you're afraid to let him out. My dear, it's all right. I'll attend to him for you."

"He's dead!" she whispered.

Kennard stared intently into her waxen-white features, and a quiver of horror passed over him. She was speaking the truth.

"You mean—you killed him?" he managed to ask.

Mrs. Carey shook her head and moistened her dry lips. She led him into her tiny dining room, where a gas fire had been lighted and, recovering herself to some extent, managed to tell him all she knew about it.

The outstanding fact was that Hugh Lloyd had met death while locked in her studio. She thought he had been shot, but hadn't been able to bring herself to examine the body closely.

"What shall I do?" she asked.

To have all the scandal of it brought home to her like this was unthinkable, as much on Carol's account as on her own. Jack Kennard realized that instantly.

He questioned her to find out how the situation stood. Nobody knew of the tragedy but herself and him. Her servant had been sent away for the day, but would be returning to-morrow morning. Nobody was likely to call. She had few friends in London, and none of them knew she was back.

Jack went into the studio and after a hurried examination of the dead man, the first thing that attracted his attention was the broken skylight, with the telephone receiver lying on the floor in the midst of a litter of glass. Besides the wound in Lloyd's chest—by no means an ordinary bullet wound, either—there was a deep cut on the man's face which had bled profusely. He must have got that cut before death.

After a little searching, Kennard found the bullet. It had gone through Lloyd's body and half imbedded itself in the wall just above the first line of Mrs. Carey's oil studies. He dug it out of the plaster with his penknife.

When he had examined it he was quite satisfied that Mrs. Carey had told him the truth when she asserted so positively that she had had nothing to do with the man's actual death. In short, she could scarcely have murdered him.

That bullet had been fired from a big game rifle, and certainly not at short range. He tried to trace a possible trajectory, but the broken skylight put him on a false scent.

The angle was all wrong, both from the wound in the body and the ultimate destination of the bullet for it to have reached the end of its trajectory and dropped straight. From the angle it would have appeared to have been projected from the bowels of the earth. The bullet could not possibly have been fitted into a lesser fire-arm; for instance, into an ordinary revolver.

But Kennard appreciated the fact that just at this moment the matter of greatest importance was to decide what to do. What he ought to do did not trouble him quite as much, perhaps, as would have troubled most people. He came from a country where sometimes men were compelled to take the law into their own hands.

He turned to Sybil Carey and put an arm around her drooping shoulders.

"We must get rid of it" he said grimly.

She understood what he meant.

"But how is that possible?"

"Let me think a minute."

As he paced to and fro, she took a dusty, paint-stained sheet from a stack of canvases and spread it over the sprawling figure on the floor.

Kennard halted and his eyes rested speculatively on one of the big wicker traveling cases in which Sybil had brought back the fruit of her several years of foreign toil.

"You're not very strong," he said, thinking aloud. "I'd have to risk getting a man in from the street to help me. Yet that would be dangerous."

A pale smile flickered on her lips.

"Don't worry. I'm strong enough for anything. What have you thought of?"

She saw him looking at the wicker case and half understood.

"Together you and I could shift that quite easily. Or, at least, we could manage to do it somehow," she said breathlessly.

By this time the early twilight was beginning to fall and Kennard discovered that instead of the hour's leave he had asked for he had taken more than two.

They went back into the little dining room, and he explained hurriedly what had happened at the wedding, and how Colonel Beaufort did not wish to let matters stand as they presumably were.

In the interests of Carol, Mrs. Carey was able to detach her mind from the gruesome thing in the studio.

"Jack," she said, "my motherless little girl would be safe with you. I feel sure you'll learn to love her—"

He laughed awkwardly. "I fell head over heels in love with her the very first moment," he said. "That's what makes it so—so bothering."

"Then keep her. Don't let them take her away from you. Keep her and teach her to love you," she said passionately. "I believe that you are a true lover—a man who not only can keep faith with one woman, but to whom there would be no temptation able to break that faith."

"You are very good—very kind to say that. I hope I shall never betray your trust in me," he replied, his voice husky

and an unaccustomed moisture in his eyes. "Can you bear being alone for a few hours? I must go back to Grosvenor Square. It would be fatal if we allowed the least suspicion—"

"Oh, yes—go. I'm not afraid to be alone."

"That's a brave woman!" He consulted his watch and found the hour to be approaching five. "I'll try to be back again about nine," he said. "If I'm detained a little, don't let yourself worry."

"No, I'll wait," she replied.

The house in Grosvenor Square had a closed look.

Carson, enigmatic, admitted him to the lofty marble entrance hall, saying: "Colonel Beaufort wished me to tell you, sir, that they've gone into the country." He coughed and added: "Miss Carol left a note for you, sir."

The butler found something to do for a moment while Kennard read his little bride's message.

We are going down to Beaufort Priory, but only for the night. Please follow as quickly as you can. Uncle Jim means to take me abroad, and I don't want to go without seeing you first. Unless you come at once you may not find me there.

CAROL.

There was a true challenge in this that sent a thrill to Kennard's troubled heart. His kidnaped wife wanted him. But, alas, he could not go to her; at least, not at once. Would the delay make any difference?

CHAPTER XII.

A STAGE SET FOR TRAGEDY.

SYBIL CAREY could not rest after she was left alone. That gruesome object in the studio drew her irresistibly. She had traveled so widely in odd corners of the world and met with such varying adventures that death had lost for her a little of the awe and terror with which it often inspires the inexperienced.

She was not afraid of Hugh Lloyd, now that he was dead. But the fact that he was lying there; that by some accident the

presence of his body might be disclosed, filled her with anxiety. She was a woman who dared not ignore her instincts. They always warned her of danger.

It seemed to her risky, as well as a waste of time, to sit idle in the little box of a dining room waiting for hours to pass until Jack Kennard returned. The thing in the studio was untidy. The place needed cleaning up.

As Kennard had said, Mrs. Carey did not look strong, but she was, in fact, a very wiry woman and her nerve force was excellent. She knew that it was in Jack's mind to hide Lloyd's body in one of the wicker cases. What he meant to do with it afterward, she did not know, but undoubtedly he had thought of something. It would save time when he did arrive if the first part of the unpleasant job was over.

In spite of Sybil's courage it took some effort to brace herself to return to the studio. She switched on the great electric lamps and drew the blinds over the skylight, the latter concealing the broken space and preventing the fall of more glass.

Drawing on a pair of thick gloves to protect her hands from the litter on the floor, she dragged one of the wicker cases to the spot where the inert figure sprawled, turned the case on its side close to the body, and by the aid of the dust sheet hauled the dead man into the open side.

By dragging and pushing, she managed finally to get the body in. Much broken glass went with it, and perhaps the situation would have been better had she waited for Jack to help her.

This done, she heaved the case upright, shuddering a little as the heavy mass inside slid down to the bottom. On top of the body she laid Lloyd's hat, umbrella and gloves, and covered it all with another dust sheet before lowering the lid. Then she dragged the case into an inconspicuous corner near the door, and already the studio began to look neater.

There was still the litter of glass. She swept this up, and replaced the telephone receiver where it belonged. Then she wiped a portion of the floor with a damp cloth, but there still remained a dark stain which was not to be removed so easily.

There were certain things to be destroyed, such as the cloth, her gloves and a handkerchief which had fallen out of Lloyd's pocket, so she put a match to the fuel in the grate, and when it was well ablaze threw the articles onto it. The way the kid gloves writhed and twisted in the flames made her physically sick.

"Life is a terrible thing!" she moaned to herself.

It seemed so much more terrible than death, even death which was wrapped in mystery. And her life certainly had been lived all through on a deeply tragic note.

The door bell rang and her heart gave a throb of relief. Jack Kennard had returned more than an hour before she could possibly have expected him. She flew down the passage, leaving the studio door open behind her. From the front door one could catch a glimpse of the fire blazing at the other end and the brilliantly lighted interior with a bright splash of color on one of the picture-hung walls.

She flung the door wide, and Jack's name was on her tongue, but it died instantly. A weebegone figure stood on the steps, a slip of a girl in elegant cloth and rich furs, with a leather traveling bag clutched in her hands.

"Mrs. Carey," she said timidly, "I am Carol Beaufort; but you remember you came to see me last evening, and I'm afraid I was rather rude to you."

Sybil fell back a step, glancing in dismay over her shoulder. What a dilemma was this?

"May I come in, please?"

"Certainly, my dear. Just for the moment I was surprised. I was expecting somebody else."

She stammered confusedly, her voice strangely agitated, to Carol's ears.

"Come in here." She turned to the little dining room, but Carol did not follow.

"Are you alone, Mrs. Carey?"

"Well, I am—now."

"Is that your studio down there? You paint, don't you? I believe you said so."

"Yes, I—I paint a little."

"Will you show me your pictures?" Carol flushed. "What I really mean, is—I'd rather not go into that front room. It's

just possible I'm being followed. Please turn off the light and take me into your studio. I won't stay long."

The little figure was cowering and trembling.

Mrs. Carey was still dazed by the surprise visit. To admit that child into the studio where the man she had expected to marry this morning lay dead, was unthinkable, yet it actually happened.

The truth was, Sybil Carey scarcely knew what she was doing. She took Carol by the hand, dragging her to the further end and making her sit close to the fire.

The girl's back was toward the wicker case. How sinister it looked in its shadowy corner. A dead man lay huddled there; a dead man in wedding regalia with a fading gardenia still fastened in his buttonhole; while the girl who was to have been his bride told the story of her misfortunes through chattering teeth to the mother she did not know. It was eerie; so weird, that to Sybil Carey it seemed as unreal as a fantastic dream.

"I can't imagine what you'll think of my coming to you," Carol said, breathlessly. "I couldn't think what to do, because every blessed soul knows I was married this morning." She waited an instant, with an inquiring look.

"Yes; you were married to Jack Kennard. I was there. I saw you come out. So you took my advice, after all," Mrs. Carey said.

The embarrassed flush deepened on the girl's cheeks.

"No, Mrs. Carey. I was jilted. I hadn't meant to take your advice. John simply didn't turn up, and Jack Kennard was there, and it seemed that the license fitted him.

"I dare say it's a fraud. Uncle Jim says so, and that my marriage must be annulled. This is why I've come to you, Mrs. Carey.

"Uncle Jim said we were to go down to Beaufort Priory for the night, he and Aunt Pam and I, and that to-morrow we'd motor over to Dover—it's a very short distance from the Priory—and I must go abroad a few weeks with them.

"I left a message for my—for Jack. A note asking him to follow us at once. I can't quite explain to you why I did that.

Do you know Jack Kennard? He's John's cousin?"

"I know Jack very well, and a dearer boy never lived," Sybil said unsteadily. She wished she could keep her eyes off that hamper. It seemed as though any moment the lid would fly open and the dead man arise to proclaim his presence. "I think I really must try to impress upon you again that Jack's cousin's real name was—or is, I should say—Lloyd. Hugh Lloyd. Every word I told you last night is true. You—you've had a lucky escape."

Carol bowed her head. She was bitterly ashamed.

"But tell me how you found out where I live? And why did you come here?" Sybil asked her.

Carol furtively wiped her eyes.

"My uncle, Colonel Beaufort, knew I'd left a note for Jack. He said nothing, however, until we reached a town called Dartle, in Kent. Then he said we wouldn't go to Great Beaufort at all, but would drive straight through to Dover. We had stopped at Dartle for a late tea.

"The inn was just opposite the railway station, and sitting by a window I happened to see the signal go down for an up train. I suppose I'm foolish. The truth is, Mrs. Carey, I didn't want to go abroad without seeing Jack again, particularly as I'd left that note for him to come to Beaufort Priory.

"It seemed—well, unkind. Not playing fair. But my uncle is rather a terrible person, and to-day I've been so thoroughly upset that I had no strength left to defy him openly."

"So you slipped out of the inn and caught the London train," Mrs. Carey prompted her.

"Yes, that's what I did. They were only too pleased when I said I'd walk up and down outside while Aunt Pam finished her tea. They had a few things to talk over by themselves, I suppose. Until lately, I've been a sort of 'goods and chattel,' and neither my uncle nor my aunt can realize that I'm my own mistress. Doubly so—now that I'm married."

There was the ghost of a mischievous glint in Carol's dark eyes, which showed

that she fully appreciated what a curious thing her marriage had turned out to be.

"Yes—I understand. You got on the train. And how did you know where to find me?" Sybil asked again.

"Oh, that was entirely due to Carson, our butler."

Mrs. Carey drew in a long breath.

"The man who showed me in last night, I suppose?"

"Yes, it was. Carson always stays late on duty. I'm sure I don't know when he sleeps. He likes attending to everything. I drove straight through to Grosvenor Square because I wanted to find out if Jack had had the note I left. He had been obliged to go out on some business or other, which I didn't think at all strange, although Uncle Jim did. He hadn't expected to marry me this morning, had he?"

"Well, Carson said Mr. Kennard had called and been given my note, and I don't quite remember what I said. I dare say I was upset and showed it.

"And then Carson suggested—perhaps that is almost too strong a word, but he put it into my head somehow to come to you. It was something about your telephoning to Jack.

"I said yes, I felt sure you wouldn't mind my asking you if you knew where I could get hold of Jack, only I hadn't the faintest notion where to find you. Carson is rather wonderful. He went off for a moment, and when he came back he had your address written down for me on a slip of paper.

"He said it was quite easy to find out. You were really a famous painter, and he'd known last night who you were, or of course he wouldn't have shown you in. I hope you'll forgive *me* for being so stupid, Mrs. Carey."

"Of course, my dear. You must have been terribly upset by what I told you. I'm only too thankful that things have turned out for you as—as they have."

Poor Sybil felt that any moment she would break down altogether. What was she to do with this forlorn little girl of hers? That thing huddled in the wicker case became doubly gruesome because of Carol's presence. It seemed to crouch there,

not dead any more, but malignantly alive. It mocked her: "You thought I was dead; that you'd finished me. But here I am. How are you going to get rid of me?"

Ah, how? That was a big question.

"Mrs. Carey, did you prevent John's coming to the church this morning?" Carol asked unexpectedly.

The older woman clenched her hands in the folds of her gown. She dared not answer truthfully; dared not in any way connect herself with the dead man. As she hesitated, Carol explained:

"Because it seems that some woman rang up his valet after he'd gone out and said to send word to us that he could not be married. Only the valet didn't take her seriously."

"Who do you suppose it was?" Mrs. Carey asked evasively.

"Well, I wondered if it might not have been you."

"My dear, what more could I do, after I'd failed with you?"

Sybil begged the question as well as she could, and to her great relief Carol accepted it.

"That's true. I certainly was stupid. Mrs. Carey, do you know where I could get into touch with Jack?"

Here was another difficult question. Any moment now Jack Kennard might turn up, according to his promise. Sybil Carey had a sudden inspiration.

"Look here, my dear, I might be able to help you to-morrow morning. That is to say, if Jack has followed you to your country place, and finds you're not there, he'll come back to town. He's quite likely to look me up. We're by way of being great friends.

"How would you like to stay here to-night? I've got a nice little spare room, and it won't take me a moment to make up the bed. I can lend you whatever you require."

"Thank you, I have my dressing case. I shouldn't need anything. Oh, it is kind of you, Mrs. Carey! I know I have no right to make such a nuisance of myself."

"My dear, you're nothing of the sort. Perhaps you'll come upstairs with me now. As a matter of fact, I'm expecting a visitor

shortly—a rather pressing and important appointment.”

Carol was quick to take the hint. Mrs. Carey's visitor, no doubt, had no interest in a little bride who did not want to be kidnapped by her well-meaning relatives.

To Sybil's relief, the girl arose at once and signified her willingness to retire to the spare room. Mrs. Carey hurried her out of the studio, past the shadowy corner where the sinister thing lurked, and closed the door behind them.

To the woman's tried nerves it seemed as if the wicker hamper had creaked ominously; and it is possible that it had creaked as inanimate objects are often wont to do.

CHAPTER XIII.

“I TOLD YOU SO!”

THE little spare bedroom was on the first floor at the back, and its one window overlooked the studio. Carol pulled aside the curtains and peered out. Although blinds had been drawn across the skylight, it was easy to see that the big room was still illuminated. Just a strip of garden fringed with a few trees bordered the studio annex. Then came a high brick wall, and beyond that various flat buildings towered.

Mrs. Carey had attended hurriedly to her guest. She lit the gas fire in the bedroom and the hot water heater in the bathroom, which was just at the top of the stairs; and she brought some linen. But Carol, realizing herself to be a somewhat inopportune guest, insisted that she could make up the bed, and Mrs. Carey was not to bother about her further.

It would be difficult to say which of the two women was the more troubled. Perhaps Mrs. Carey had the greater problem on her mind, but Carol's was the more personal.

To-night she and John—to her Lloyd was still John Kennard—should have been occupying the suite which had been ordered for them at the Lord Warden Hotel in Dover. And here she was, married to a man she had just met, and thrusting herself upon the hospitality of a strange woman.

She was afraid to go back to her own home. What would the servants think, for one thing? And then there were Uncle Jim and Aunt Pam, determined not to let her decide for herself in this most important matter.

Of course, they had her at a great disadvantage. They had never liked John, and were now in a position to say, “I told you so.” Easy enough to point out to her now that her own judgment was worthless, and common sense demanded that she should rely on theirs.

They could bring all sorts of pressure to bear on her, despite the fact that she was her own mistress. For the moment, her resistance was enfeebled. She could not fight them, but she could and had run away.

The trouble was, she did not quite know what she wanted.

Bluntly, did she want to be the wife of that blue-eyed young man who was such a complete stranger to her? In law, she was his wife; but according to Uncle Jim the circumstances of her marriage were such that it could easily be set aside.

Did she *want* to be Jack Kennard's wife? Put in that way, the answer was no. And it was also no when it came to the question of never seeing him again.

The romantic history of the Beauforts precluded the possibility of a daughter of the house relinquishing so easily her right to dally with such an interesting situation. There was something about Jack that thrilled and intrigued her. He had come most gallantly to her rescue in the blackest moment of her life, and something was owed him for that.

The Beauforts always paid their debts of honor. All he had asked of her was the privilege of getting to know her, of letting her get to know him. Surely that was reasonable.

“Of course,” she sighed to herself, “I could never love him quite in the same way that I loved John.”

She was appalled suddenly to discover that already she thought of her love for John in the past tense. Was it over, then, just because he had jilted her so cruelly? Or because he was a man with something

sinister in his past? "Love is not love when it alteration finds," she quoted to herself. She was overwhelmed with self-contempt.

There was an empty void in her heart where love had been, and it would remain empty. She thought of her little mission house down in the East End, and resolved that her life's work, and what happiness there was to be got out of it, lay there, in helping personally to look after the ailing babies her generous bounty supported.

Hitherto she had given only money, and she had come suddenly to despise her wealth. Undoubtedly it had led to her present plight. Everybody had said that John was a fortune hunter, and poor Carol was forced to a tremulous conviction that for once the world had been right.

She unpacked her case and arrayed herself for the night. With a dressing gown over her nightrobe, she took her toilet things across the hall to the bathroom, there being no washing stand in the spare bedroom.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ONLOOKER.

TO the weary woman downstairs, minutes dragged as hours. She wondered what Jack would say if she told him she had Carol actually staying here. Not for a hundred Hugh Lloyds, alive or dead, would she have refused her daughter shelter. At last she, who was so poor comparatively, had something to give Carol.

What time was it? She listened attentively to the church clock. Eleven? She had taken up her post in the dark by one of the dining room windows which looked into the quiet street.

At every footfall she started up, ready to go to the door before he could ring. But very few people passed. This was Chelsea's quiet hour. By half past eleven there would be taxicabs whirling along the Embankment, signifying that the theaters were out.

Impatient with the delay, she finally went to the front door. Suppose Jack failed her? Something might have happened to him, or he might have been seized with an irresisti-

ble desire to go down to Beaufort Priory in pursuit of his bride, thinking that to-morrow would do as well for the fulfillment of his promise to help her out of this terrible situation. Yet she had made it quite clear to him that her servant was coming back in the morning.

A man trundling a hand barrow turned into the little street. In the dark it was difficult to distinguish clearly, but he looked like a workingman. Only perhaps a little too tall for the average. Mrs. Carey peered intently from the doorway, sick with deferred hope, that most depressing of all emotions.

The man with the hand barrow stopped in front of her house—and it was Jack Kennard.

Whispering frantically she admitted him and they went into the studio. He had been down to the East End, he told her, bought the barrow and some old clothes in the poorer quarter, and then walked all the way up from Whitechapel, pushing the hand barrow. He had also been obliged to possess himself of a guide to London.

His own clothes were in a bundle on the barrow. He went out again to fetch them. Mrs. Carey must look after them for him.

When he saw what she had done, he was amazed.

"All by yourself!" he exclaimed incredulously. "You must have nerves of iron."

"Not now," she replied. "After this I don't suppose I shall ever be the same woman again—but I dare say it's entirely my own fault."

She flashed him a wistful smile and, beset with worry as he was, he had time to marvel again at the charm of her. Sybil Carey was the sort of woman for whom men die without consciousness of great heroism. They would forget themselves and remember only her.

Having thought it over, she decided not to tell him that Carol was here. It would take too long, and also might reasonably interfere with his absorption in the task in hand. By this time she felt quite confident that the little bride, if not asleep, was in bed and out of hearing.

"What are you going to do?" she asked Jack.

The strength of his presence gave her such confidence that she almost wept with the relief of it.

He detailed the plan which had suggested itself to him. It was impossible to dispose of Lloyd's body absolutely; that is to say, cause it to vanish into thin air. The murder—if murder it was—would have to "out" to a certain extent.

The only thing Jack felt he might be able to do was to dissociate his cousin's mysterious death from Sybil Carey. She might hold herself responsible for it, because she had locked the man up; but it was through him, Jack, that she had been made aware of Carol Beaufort's danger. He knew himself to be primarily responsible, and he certainly did not mean to let her suffer if he could help it.

"I'm going to take one of those long chances," he said. "You know, sometimes they come off."

Sybil nodded. She had taken long chances many times in her life and could await reward or disappointment with stoicism.

"If it doesn't"—Kennard shrugged his shoulders, and again she nodded—"with your help, my dear, I propose to get that case onto my barrow, and push it through the streets of this here London town to Barnes's Common.

"I may have luck—and I may not. If I see the chance of a really isolated spot before I get there—well, I'll leave the poor beggar wherever it's convenient."

"You mean," she said, unconsciously brutal, "dump him out somewhere."

"Yes," Kennard replied.

"It will create a tremendous inquiry."

"Naturally."

"But there's nothing to show. I mean, you'll be very careful. There's a laundry mark on that dust sheet."

"I see you read the papers," he said with a grim laugh. "I'll bring the sheet back, and the case as well. But, of course, it all depends on luck. A policeman may stop me and express curiosity as to what I'm conveying."

"Yes—there's every risk. I see that. A hundred to one chance. Jack, you're wonderfully brave."

She liked the look he threw her—humorous, grim, a little scoffing.

"We needn't get sentimental," he said. "A job's got to be done—and a deuced unpleasant job it is, too. If I hadn't been through the war and seen a few things that were pretty hateful, no doubt I'd dodge this. But I've lost any squeamishness I might ever have possessed."

"Come along. The sooner we get started, the better. So far the night is young, but it won't last forever."

Sybil set her teeth and tried not to think what was inside that basket as they lifted, hauled and pushed it up the step from the studio and down the long passage.

At the foot of the stairs, just inside the front doorway, she called a halt, drawing a hand across her moist forehead and staggering back, fatigued not physically, but with emotion.

"My dear, you're done for! You must let me finish this by myself," Kennard exclaimed contritely.

"No—no! I'm all right, really. And you can't possibly lift it onto the barrow alone."

They bent to it again, silently, while a girl looked down at them from the top of the stairs.

Carol, hugging her dressing gown to her breast, stared incredulously at that curious scene: The distraught, tired woman and Jack Kennard in the rough clothes of a workingman, shoving and hauling a heavy packing case through the hall to the street.

What on earth could it mean?

CHAPTER XV.

A SINISTER SITUATION.

CAROL went into the spare bedroom and closed the door very quietly behind her, locking it as well.

Mystery is always accompanied by a sense of the uncanny, and what she had just witnessed was most mysterious.

After all, who were these people, Sybil Carey and Jack Kennard? Absolute strangers to her.

The poor little rich girl, whose life had always been so carefully sheltered, felt as

if she had walked out of the home nest straight into some sort of trap.

Kennard, in rough clothes, with a cap pulled down over his eyes and a knotted handkerchief doing duty as a collar, being helped by Mrs. Carey—obviously not strong enough for the task—to drag a heavy packing case out of the house in the dead of night. They had been decidedly surreptitious about it, too; talking in whispers, their faces grave and anxious.

In vain the apprehensive young bride racked her brain for a natural solution of the mystery. She could think of none.

Her eavesdropping had been by purest accident. Finding that the water from the gas heater was running very hot, she decided to have a bath, thinking it might rest her and induce sleep. Consequently, she had taken a little longer than would have been otherwise, and was returning to the bedroom just in time to witness the strange scene in the hall below.

She was very far, indeed, from guessing what that heavy case really contained, but from the manner of the two who were removing it the incident could not be otherwise than questionable.

She finally heard Mrs. Carey come back into the house and the sound of the front door being closed. Since the room she occupied was at the back, Carol did not know what had happened to Jack Kennard and the packing case after they were out of the house.

Mrs. Carey came upstairs and stood for a moment outside Carol's door. The girl knew she was listening for any sound from within, and was glad that the light had been switched off.

In a way, Mrs. Carey had deceived her. The woman had been expecting Jack Kennard all the time. Carol remembered how restless she had been, how anxious to get her unexpected guest out of the studio and upstairs.

Yet she might quite as easily have got her out of the house. Carol certainly hadn't expected to be invited to spend the night here.

It was one o'clock. A wind started up, and the bare limbs of the trees which fringed the studio creaked dismally. Carol

tossed to and fro, apprehensive of something to which she could not put a name.

What had Uncle Jim and Aunt Pam done when they discovered that she had run away? Would Carson have informed them that she had gone to a stranger? She thought of Jack Kennard's blue eyes; how they had burned deep into hers that morning when he said "I'll be good to you, little girl." She had been thrilled and comforted. The thrill had lasted all through the solemn ceremony.

What was the mystery of this midnight visit to the artist woman? Carol's self-confidence had been badly shaken during the last twenty-four hours. She began to wonder if she had not been altogether foolish in trying to take matters into her own hands.

In the intervals of straying thought she slept a little and also dreamed. Sleeping and waking were hatefully intermingled. It was about half past five when she sat up suddenly and determined to leave this house before Mrs. Carey was astir. She did not feel equal to facing her hostess with the half knowledge she possessed that something queer had taken place.

She slipped out of bed and began to dress as quickly as possible. Drawing aside the window curtains to let in the dawn—which showed no sign as yet of arriving—she was startled to see that the studio was still lighted.

Something stirred down in the narrow strip of garden. A gate at the back creaked on being closed, and there was the sound of a vehicle of sorts being wheeled over dead leaves.

Carol could see nothing because the studio annex hid what was going on, until a man's form emerged from around the corner and approached the back of the house, presumably the kitchen door. A shaft of light streamed out for a moment as if to welcome him, and Carol saw that the man was Jack Kennard.

The door closed and the light disappeared.

The girl was thoroughly frightened by this time, and her one thought was to get away. These were queer people. The very air was electric with sinister suggestions.

All through the night something had been going on—something unnatural and weird. Honest folk used the night for slumber.

The little bride's teeth were chattering and her hands shook so that she could scarcely hold her bag when finally she emerged from the room, and listening, poised herself for flight. Just down those stairs, and out into the street.

Afterward, it did not so much matter. She could go back to Grosvenor Square, or down to the Mission House for Father Dawley's advice and protection.

"So you're back!" Mrs. Carey remarked in great relief.

"Yes, thank Heaven! The long chance came off. Do you want me to tell you about it?"

"Not just now, Jack. I've built up a roaring fire in the studio. I felt I simply had to destroy the bogey at once. Not be afraid of that room, you understand. I must forget what has happened there. Treat it as though it had never been."

Kennard nodded. He did not know whether he agreed with her or not. He was too tired to think about anything.

"Have you had any sleep?" he asked, stumbling from fatigue as he followed her in through the kitchen.

"A little. And you? You must lie down on the couch as soon as I've given you something to eat."

"No. I couldn't sleep to save my soul. I'm dog tired, but not sleepy."

Dulled and thoroughly jaded he was, but he could not fail to observe that she had done something to her big studio room which completely obliterated any thought of the tragedy which had so recently taken place there. She must have worked in the small hours like one inspired.

Rugs relieved the bareness of the parquet floor. She had never been very careful to cover over that dark stain which no ordinary scrubbing could remove.

Chairs and a couch had been divested of their dust sheets and arranged cozily around the blazing hearth. There was also a table with a tray, chafing dish and coffee machine.

All the wicker picture cases had been

hidden together behind a tall Spanish leather screen. She had turned off the hard overhead lights and substituted the mellow glow of table lamps.

And having done all this, she had still found time to think of her personal appearance, changing into a creamy wool gown, not unlike a monk's robe, severely cut from throat to ankle, and girdled loosely with a twisted silken rope of the same color. For contrast there were the glossy black braids wound into a crown, and the shadowy darkness of her tender eyes.

"This is very kind of you," Kennard said, realizing in a flash that she was offering him the best reward in her power for his long ordeal.

"There was so little I could do," she said wistfully. "I hope you will be able to eat something."

Kennard sunk into a chair without replying, and watched her idly. There was, strange to say, a sort of comfort in his extreme fatigue.

Mrs. Carey put a match to the coffee machine. Kennard closed his eyes and opened them again when bacon and scrambled eggs began to sizzle in the chafing dish. She reached out to the fire with a toasting fork, and the sweet odor of browning crust assailed him.

"By Jove, I am hungry!" he exclaimed. "I wouldn't have believed it possible. I thought I'd never be able to eat again."

"It's what you need—food," she said.

In another moment the delicious little breakfast would be ready for him. He would eat it, and then he would tell her briefly what had happened; and afterward she would make him curl up on the couch and go to sleep.

Poor fellow! She felt miserably contrite. It seemed to her that she had used him to get herself out of a bad hole, and that she ought never to have done so.

Possibly Jack's apprehensions were more acute than hers, or it may be that she was so wholly occupied with the task of bringing his breakfast to a successful conclusion that she failed to notice a sound which carried to him. It must really have been as much a feeling as an actual sound. He got up and sauntered to the door. Then

he went out into the passage and walked rapidly but softly to the end. There he came face to face with Carol, halfway down the stairs.

CHAPTER XVI.

WOMAN'S WIT.

OF the two, Kennard was of course the more surprised. For the moment he was completely dumfounded. They stared at each other until Carol remembered that she was a Beaufort and could extract a little haughty satisfaction from that fact.

"Will you kindly tell Mrs. Carey that I am going?" she said. "I didn't wish to bother her. She has had such a busy night."

"Wait a moment." Kennard planted himself at the foot of the stairs, blocking her way. "Why are you here? How did you get in? Does Mrs. Carey know you are here?"

The girl's lips curled scornfully.

"I ran away from my people—which was rather a mistake," she drawled. "When Carson gave me Mrs. Carey's address and I came here to see if I could get into touch with you, I hadn't the vaguest idea that I was inviting myself into a den of—of crooks."

Kennard winced. How much did she know? he wondered. It might be a great deal, or it might be nothing. His own appearance was decidedly against him. He looked a ruffian. A haze of beard showed on his chin; his eyes were hollow, his face drawn with fatigue, and the rough clothes and absence of a collar did not improve matters.

"You have made a mistake," he said gravely. "Not in coming here, however—but a very great mistake in jumping to hasty conclusions. This is not a den of crooks."

There was a rustle of skirts, and Sybil Carey came quickly along the passage.

"Carol!" she exclaimed a little sharply, almost as if she had a right to administer rebuke. "What does this mean?"

The girl's steady glance completely unnerved her.

"I wasn't able to sleep, so I thought I would go away without disturbing you. What you and Mr. Kennard choose to do in the middle of the night is really no concern of mine, but I don't think I care to be here."

Sybil flashed Kennard a look which seemed to say: "We shall have to tell her!"

He shook his head, no.

"Go and eat your breakfast, Jack," she admonished. "It will gain nothing by getting cold. I will talk to this foolish child."

How on earth was she to explain away the situation? To begin with, she hadn't the faintest idea how much or what it was that Carol really knew, except that quite obviously the girl didn't suspect that Hugh Lloyd had been killed in her studio. But in a few hours, if not already, his body would be discovered, and Carol was quite clever enough to fit the circumstances together.

There was no telling what the girl would believe, or what action she might take.

Was any lie big enough to cover the monstrous suspicion which must arise in Carol's mind when the hue and cry began?

"Come in here, my dear," Sybil said quickly. An idea had occurred to her; it was a poor one, but it might possibly serve. She remembered that in the old days she had been something of an actress. That "double life" of hers, which had so outraged Francis Beaufort when it came to light, had been lived without a flicker of self-betrayal.

Perhaps she could be as successful at deception on this occasion, but it required a lot of courage. Above all, it had to be done light-heartedly. She decided to go on the assumption that Carol had witnessed the surreptitious removal of the wicker case. It was safer.

Carol obeyed somewhat sulkily. She felt slightly ashamed of her rudeness to this woman who had so hospitably offered her shelter.

They went into the little dining room.

"My dear, I scarcely know how to tell you. It sounds so silly, and of course it's wrong, but you mustn't blame poor Jack for being kind to a woman in distress. I

don't know what you imagined we might be up to, bumping about at all hours of the night, and Jack in that ridiculous get-up. The truth is—"

She paused to draw breath, thinking how often a liar prefaces his biggest falsehood with that statement. "The truth is—I'm expecting the bailiffs in this morning. It's a matter of three hundred pounds or so. Of course, Jack wanted to lend it to me, but I've no immediate prospect of paying him back and I simply couldn't take it. But I said he might help me in another way.

"I own some rather valuable pictures which would break my heart to part with. A friend of mine offered to take charge of them. Only I was afraid to send them away boldly by a carrier. Some workmen had left a barrow in the garden and Jack suggested that he could manage the trick for me.

"I'm thoroughly ashamed that you should have caught us. Of course it was wrong, but after all, they are my pictures, and I'm sure the wretched broker's men will realize enough on what I've left to satisfy my creditors."

There was not the least reason why Carol should not swallow this story whole, and she did, without the least effort. Her gentle eyes brimmed over with tears.

"Oh, Mrs. Carey, do forgive me! I'm a horrid beast. I don't know what I thought—only it seemed so strange, and my nerves were rather upset.

"Will you—will you *please* let me give you the money? I've got so much. You could take it from me, couldn't you? I can't bear to think of your being turned out of your dear little home for a few hundred pounds when it would mean nothing to me at all."

This was a contingency which Sybil Carey had feared. She hesitated, while the girl's eyes implored her—those tender, dark pools so like her own that she seemed to be gazing into a mirrored reflection.

"Thank you," she said gravely. "Yes, I will take it from you." The acceptance would certainly give body to her flimsy tale. "Perhaps I can pay you back reasonably soon. And I don't suppose it would matter very much if I didn't."

"You need never repay me at all." Carol flushed. "I didn't mean that. Don't think I want to insult you. Only, you've been so very good to me that I feel myself terribly in your debt. I'll go up and take my things off now, and then I'll draw a check for you. Shall I make it out for four hundred?"

"Two hundred and fifty will be ample," Sybil replied, hating herself, yet at the same time relieved beyond measure to have bridged the situation so successfully. "I wonder," she thought, "if it will occur to her that my supposed troubles could scarcely have weighed with Jack against her message that he was to follow her to Beaufort Priory?"

So far Kennard was in the dark as to the story she had told. She must inform him without loss of time, but when she hurried back into the studio and discovered that he had fallen sound asleep, without even finishing his breakfast, her heart failed her. It would be cruel to awaken him.

However, there was nothing else to do. It was not at all difficult. He awoke with a start, flinging out his arms and uttering a sharp cry.

"Jack—it's Sybil. Listen. Try to understand what I'm saying, and then you can go to sleep again—"

Even the brief rest had refreshed him. He nodded grimly as she explained. Both of them were wondering if Carol would still accept the story about the bailiffs when the mysterious death of Hugh Lloyd was announced. They were afraid to talk very much.

Any moment she might come in. Under cover of clearing away the breakfast things, Mrs. Carey spoke guardedly and Kennard answered her, striving to make his tone merely conversational.

Summed up it amounted to this, that he had not been able to dispose of his grim cargo with anything like ease and dispatch. Barnes's Common had been out of the question—still too many people about, including a police constable, who eyed him suspiciously.

So he had pushed on toward East Sheen, and in the end had contrived to leave his unfortunate cousin's body in the garden of

an empty house off the main road, a gloomy looking place set in a tangle of shrubbery, and advertised by a "To Let" sign. He did not know the exact location of the house, but doubtless the newspapers would furnish that information in due course.

Mrs. Carey shivered. How she dreaded the moment when London would be placarded with the sensational news. She felt as guilty as if she had actually killed Hugh Lloyd herself.

CHAPTER XVII.

A HANG-FIRE SENSATION.

MEANWHILE, Carol was doing quite a lot of hard thinking on the subject of her impulsive marriage. The girl's mind had been cleared of every vestige of suspicion that Kennard and Mrs. Carey had been engaged in anything more questionable than what she had been told.

She believed the bailiff story, and while Mrs. Carey might be said to have no right to remove any of her valuables, still it was a human sort of fraud. Carol was thoroughly sympathetic on that score, and very glad to be able to help this kind, new friend. When she thought how rude she herself had been, she was covered with shame and remorse.

But naturally her main interest was centered in herself and her own future. Hugh Lloyd—John, as he was to her—had faded into a blurred perspective.

"Why, he might almost be dead as far as I am concerned!" she astonished herself by saying. And so soon, too. Could it possibly be true that Jack Kennard had stolen away a little of her heart on the occasion of their very first meeting?

She confessed privately to a secret and even lively interest in the man who had so nobly stepped into the breach and married her. The mere touch of his hand had given her a thrill never before experienced. She felt entirely wayward with regard to Uncle Jim and Aunt Pam, yet of course they must be informed where she was and what she meant to do.

The world supposed her to be on her honeymoon and to go back to Grosvenor

Square was to court the sort of scandal which would horrify the whole Beaufort tribe. She wondered if Mrs. Carey would let her stay here for a few days. It seemed a lot to ask of a stranger.

When she came down again she found her hostess laying out a second meal in the dining room and realized that she was quite ready for breakfast herself.

London began to wake up. Another day had dawned.

Mrs. Carey's slightly worried manner was easily explained by the supposed financial strain she had been through. She said she was going out early with Carol's check to put that matter straight.

Meanwhile Sarah, the caretaker, returned from her brief holiday, and Kennard, trying to feel that he was reasonably refreshed, was given an opportunity to change into his ordinary clothes and went around the corner to get shaved. Carol did not see him. She had gone upstairs again to write a note to Uncle Jim.

By this time the girl was completely fascinated by her hostess. It was as though Mrs. Carey had woven a spell about her. Little did she realize what a bomb shell her explanation to Uncle Jim would prove to be. She wrote:

For the time being I am staying with a Mrs. Carey at the above address. She has been very good to me and I am perfectly safe and as happy as can be expected. I must make up my mind for myself, and I beg of you and Aunt Pam not to worry or excite yourselves about me. Please tell Melford to send the smallest of my packed trunks around this morning. I have only my dressing-case and the clothes I am wearing.

For Sybil there would have been nothing but joy in this situation had her mind been free to revel in it. She had kept her promise to the Beauforts, to the dead as well as to the living; the promise wrung from her by sheer force that she would never make herself known to her daughter, which was the price Francis Beaufort had exacted for his magnanimity as to her "double life."

Yes, she had kept that promise, was keeping it even now when Carol needed a mother so much, but time had given her revenge. It was a thousand pities that she was too worried to enjoy it up to the hilt.

Carol went out to send her letter off to Uncle Jim by special messenger, and returning she ran into Jack Kennard, who was standing in front of a small news shop scanning with a frown the first edition of an evening paper. He caught sight of her and crushed the paper into a ball, hurling it into the street.

"Didn't you pick a winner?" she asked, determined to be friendly after her rudeness of the early morning. "Or is it too soon to know?"

"I'm afraid it's a little too soon," he replied with a double meaning she did not suspect. When that sheet went to press Hugh Lloyd's body had not yet been discovered. Kennard felt that the suspense would drive him mad.

"Are you still angry with me for being such a—such an idiot this morning?" Carol asked wistfully.

"Good Heavens, no—I'd forgotten all about it."

He was impersonally casual, and it hurt her. She wasn't used to being treated in an offhand way, as if of scant importance. The previous day, at the end of that hideous wait at the church door he had spoken with a passion that carried her away.

She hesitated, indecisive. Of course, he couldn't have cared as much as he had pretended. He hadn't followed her down to

Beaufort Priory, where she thought she was being taken. He had preferred to make an adventure out of helping Mrs. Carey to cheat the bailiffs.

"It's nearly lunch time," he said abruptly. "Would you like to go and eat somewhere with me?"

Where was the pride of the Beauforts? This was not an invitation given from the heart. It was merely a suggestion from an irritated and perhaps slightly bored man who simply did not know what else to say, and in the circumstances must say something.

"That's very kind of you," Carol murmured meekly. "Where can we go?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"There's a little restaurant on the Embankment—"

"Very well. Anywhere."

She felt as though he had struck her. Could this disagreeable young man be the same Jack Kennard whose blue eyes and charming smile had already worked such havoc with her emotions?

He had changed out of all recognition. Perhaps, again, Uncle Jim was right. Perhaps it was only a money settlement the man from Africa wanted—a substantial reward for his gallantry.

She was a million miles from guessing the real cause of his changed manner.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.



S O N G

YOUR heart is a music box, dearest!
 With exquisite tunes at command,
 Of melody sweetest and clearest,
 If tried by a delicate hand;
 But its workmanship, love, is so fine,
 At a single rude touch it would break;
 Then, oh! be the magic key mine,
 Its fairylike whispers to wake.
 And there's one little tune it can play,
 That I fancy all others above—
 You learned it of Cupid one day—
 It begins with and ends with "I love!"
 My heart echoes to it "I love!"

Frances Sargent Osgood.



Sacrifices

By THOMSON BURTIS

HE sat by the small deal table, reading the letter in the rays of the lamp which was connected with the single electric light socket. Cot, trunk and the other chair were shrouded in darkness, and the severe barrenness of the small tent's interior was softened in the shadow. Through the small vent at the top a square of purple sky, studded with stars, provided a tiny sample of the glory of a Texas night.

Fred lit a cigarette and got to his feet, thrusting the letter in his pocket. Same old story—poor old Mr. Grady was getting more and more insistent that the young owner of the Binder factory come home and take his rightful place at the head of the business. Ever since the death of the elder Binder, Grady had been managing the factory alone, and of late, after forty years in the harness, he was realizing that he was growing old.

Fred grinned as he thought of the last sentence in the letter: “—so the quicker

you quit being a crazy aviator and get back here the fatter your pocketbook will be and you will have some chance to live a year or two longer.” Some day he would have to go back, but meanwhile there were other and more important things to think about.

Rather, there was one thing. For he had definitely made up his mind that this night he was going to ask Frances to marry him.

He went slowly about the business of dressing, all thought of the letter in his pocket gone from his mind as he dwelt on the evening ahead of him. In the khaki shirt and tight-fitting breeches and boots of the army air service he seemed extremely tall and broad-shouldered. Neck and face were tanned to a deep bronze by long hours in the air, plus two years of Texas heat. Above the frank gray eyes and broad forehead his tawny hair was in wild disarray, yielding reluctantly to the tyranny of comb and brushes.

The arduous job of insinuating himself into the complicated harness of full uniform being finally complete, he took a last survey of himself in the tiny mirror and emerged from the tent, cap in hand. He walked slowly up the boardwalk between the two lines of tents. He stopped for a moment where the walk joined the road skirting the southern edge of the airdrome and drank in the scene.

To right and left the huge corrugated iron hangars which bounded the flying field bulked dimly in the gloom, the lights on their corners like glowing jewels on the softly heavy mantle of the night. Northward, beyond the edge of the field, there was naught but mysterious shadow. The line of buildings—headquarters, mess hall, barracks, recreation building—were ablaze with light.

Once again the love of the life swept over him. The romance of it was like wine. He thought of those other airdromes of the patrol which dotted the border; some of them mere cleared spaces in a desert of mesquite, like Marfa, and others lying in the settled country, like El Paso and Nogales. To-morrow morning in the dim gray dawn the great bombers would emerge from the hangars, and from the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of California the border would be spanned by roaring ships of the patrol, hurling themselves at a hundred miles an hour over the far-stretching bad lands of the Big Bend, the flaming deserts of the far southwest, the towering mountains around El Paso. The struggle of the border was still going on, and it was the duty of the picked men of the border patrol to watch unceasingly that land of a thousand sagas of pioneer struggle. The smugglers, the outlaws, the cattle rustlers—all had learned to fear the aerial range riders who swept above the Rio Grande.

It was almost unthinkable that he should leave all this—the thrill of it, and the pure joy of being a-part of it. And there was Frances, too—Frances, with her glorious joy in living and her life of mingled ranch activity and exclusive schools, with frequent intervals in San Antonio and El Paso. She loved the border, and the romance of the patrol. He could not ask her to go back

to New Hampshire—to a little town nestling in the hills in which the Binder factory was the only industry and the reason for Carrollton's very existence.

He dropped into the recreation hall for a few moments before starting townward. The comfortable room, with picture-covered walls and magazine-heaped table and many easy chairs, was well filled with the dozen officers of the flight. Five of them were playing poker with Sheriff Bill Trowbridge, who was a frequent visitor. There was a table of bridge, and over by the phonograph sat Major Searles, the flight surgeon, indulging in his usual recreation. He was humming an imitation tuba accompaniment to the music of the record. The scrawny, bespectacled and well-beloved old major had once played the tuba in a high school band, and had never ceased to cherish the thought that he had the makings of a wonderful musician.

"Lo, sheriff!" Binder greeted the old man. "How much of our hard-earned kale are you getting away with?"

"Nary cent!" grunted the old-timer, his puckered eyes twinkling as they rested on the immaculate flyer. "This here Tex MacDowell and Sleepy Spears—in fact, none of 'em—have any respect for age whatever and notwithstandin'!"

Binder watched the game idly. It was a little too early to start for town. The sheriff and Major Searles indulged in perpetual repartee anent the happenings of a mysterious expedition of theirs to Matamoras, Mexico, a few nights before. The thin little medico beamed through his glasses and sent back verbal fusillades as heavy as any he received. Never in his eventful life had the indomitable major enjoyed himself as he had during the year he had been ministering to the mental and physical necessities of these tanned, level-eyed, devil-may-care youngsters who must at all costs be kept on edge like professional athletes. He loved the job.

"As usual, of late, Lieutenant Frederic Binder, officer we know and gentleman we hope but have doubts of, is washed, polished and highly perfumed for the evening," remarked Sleepy Spears negligently. "I used to figure that Frances could see beneath the

camouflage of the outer man, but I guess she can't. They all fall for the uniform—"

"There's a lot of uniforms here she never fell for," remarked huge, blond George Hickman, scrutinizing his cards. "I'll open for three dollars."

"I'll remain," announced Tex MacDowell, generally considered to be the premier flyer of the blue-ribbon aggregation of airmen who composed the patrol. "George speaks as though he belonged to the growing society of Those to Whom Frances Is a Sister."

Fred grinned easily.

"Fools rush in where angels fear to tread," he remarked.

"Thanks for the compliment," replied Hickman. "Two cards."

"Anybody going to town?" inquired Fred. "Well, see you all later."

As he turned his roadster toward the splash of light against the sky which indicated the location of McMullen an extemporized quartet suddenly gave tongue to the chant of the border patrol:

Ten thousand dollars, going to the folks;
Ten thousand dollars, going to the folks;
Engine goes blooey, another flyer croaks—
Ten thousand dollars, going to the folks!"

II.

HE found Frances alone on the veranda of the bungalow which sprawled comfortably on a cool, green lawn. She was visiting the Hon. Samuel Edwards, an old friend of her father's, who had risen from cowboy up through the Texas Rangers, finally to become mayor of McMullen. Her mother had been dead several years.

"They've all gone to the movies," she told Binder as he came up the steps.

As he took her hand he was conscious of the feeling of humility which always seemed to overwhelm him when he dared to think of her as his own. Her tranquil beauty, the overflowing health and vitality which was the fruit of her open-air life on the ranch, the frank comradeship which never held a hint of the cheap daring which characterized so many of the girls he had known—all contributed to his utter adoration of her.

She leaned back easily in her big chair and gazed at the sky.

"This night wasn't made for movies," she said.

"Is that a hint?" grinned Fred.

She laughed. Her laugh was low-pitched, like her voice, and yet in some subtle way it expressed a whole-hearted joy in life and living.

"No, it's just a statement of fact," she returned. "Somebody told me that Tex MacDowell had a wreck this afternoon."

"He did," nodded Fred. "Motor cut out about five miles back here and he piled up in an irrigation ditch. He was coming back from the Gulf patrol."

"Was he—hurt?"

"Not a scratch. He's playing poker with the sheriff and the bunch with his usual gusto."

She was silent a moment, then said slowly:

"Every time I think of this whole border being patrolled by air it gives me a thrill, Fred. You know I've been brought up on tales of the old days when daddy and Sheriff Bill and Uncle Sam Edwards were young. It's in my blood, I guess."

"It's funny about this fly-bitten, deserted, baking country," remarked Fred. "It's wild and half desert and overrun with Spigs and it's so hot the horned toads shrivel, but it seems to get in a man's blood some way."

Finally there was a moment of silence, and they watched the parade of automobiles rolling along the boulevard in front of the house. His heart was beating rapidly as his eyes dwelt on the lovely face outlined dimly through the dusk. Suddenly he threw his cigarette away and went over beside her chair. She looked up quickly and for a moment their eyes met.

"Frances, I—I—" he stammered, all his self-sufficiency gone. "I—Frances, you must know that I'm crazy about you and that—that I want you, honey. I haven't been able to think of anybody or anything else since I first saw you."

The words came more easily now that he had taken the plunge. He bent over her and his hand found hers.

"Will you marry me, dearest?"

Her eyes were averted, and she was motionless in the chair. He went on, in a rush of words:

"I'll try my best to make you happy, sweetheart, and I know you'll like the army life. We can see the Philippines, and Hawaii, and all that time I'll be doing nothing but try to make you happy. Frances, I love you so much!"

"I—I'm sorry, Fred."

The words came with an effort, and there was a hint of a sob in her voice. For a moment the frank, level gaze he knew and loved so well rested on his face, and there was the sparkle of tears in her eyes.

He was stunned. He scarcely heard her when she said:

"Fred—I'm afraid I'm going to cry!"

He straightened silently, and lighted a cigarette without the slightest idea of what he was doing. He stood for a moment gazing unseeing at the panorama of the street. Somehow the thought of pressing his suit, even of asking the immemorial question, "Is there some one else?" did not occur to him.

"Frances, you—you won't marry me?" he finally said, his voice unsteady.

"I'm afraid not, Fred," she answered.

"And—you won't tell me why?"

"I can't, Fred dear—please don't ask me!"

There was something pitiful in her words—and final. For a moment their eyes held, and in both there was more than a hint of tears.

Fred essayed a wry little grin and reached for his cap."

"You won't mind if I beat it, Frances? I guess I need to—sort of get hold of myself," he said unsteadily.

She nodded wordlessly. He walked down the steps and out to the car, cap in hand. He looked very tall and straight in his uniform. The car slid away and joined the current of vehicles moving toward town. Back on the porch Frances sobbed quietly.

III.

It was precisely four thirty the next afternoon when Fred drew up to the mayor's domicile just as a telegraph messenger was

coming down the walk. He could see Frances standing in the door, reading the message.

As he came up the walk he saw her crumple the yellow sheet slowly, and as she looked at him her face was white beneath the golden tan.

"Why, Frances, what's the matter?" he asked quickly as he leaped up the steps.

"It's father," she said, holding her voice steady with an effort.

He took the message she held toward him and scanned it rapidly:

Your daddy got hurt bad by that dago horse. Get doctor and come pronto. The boys are doing all they can.

JOE.

"Who's Joe?" he asked mechanically.

"The ranch foreman. And, Fred, Dr. Sprague can't get there until to-morrow morning by train, and there's a ten-mile ride—"

An idea flashed through the flyer's mind while she was speaking.

"What about Major Searles?" he asked swiftly. "I can fly him over there in forty minutes. Say, if you want to get to him, we'll take two ships, and you can go, too."

"Good afternoon, Fred," came corpulent Mrs. Edwards's genial tones, as that lady emerged from the house. "Why, Frances, honey, what's the matter?"

Fred explained briefly.

"And I'm going to fly her over there, and Major Searles, too," he concluded. "Didn't you say there were some cotton fields on the ranch?"

The wide-eyed girl nodded.

"Can I use your telephone, Mrs. Edwards? Thank you!"

He disappeared into the house before Mrs. Edwards's voluble objections had even started. The next minute the motherly old woman had the sobbing girl in her arms, and was comforting her in low words of endearment.

"There, there, honey; of course you'll fly over. You'll be there in a few minutes. Major Searles is a real doctor, I can tell you."

"I shouldn't have left daddy so long. If I was only there—"

"Don't you fret, honey. He probably ain't near as bad as you think. Now you get some things together."

"No need of that," said Fred crisply as he came out on the porch. "I've got everything fixed with Captain Kennard, and Tex MacDowell will fly the major and I'll take you. Let's not lose any time—you'll have clothes and things over there, won't you?"

She nodded. In a few seconds they were in the roadster and speeding toward the field.

"My lands!" breathed the mayor's wife. "These flyers!"

They covered the four miles in six minutes flat. As they turned into the airdrome two great DeHavilands were already roaring in the warm-up. The whirling propellers were throwing great clouds of dust into the air as the four hundred and fifty horse power Libertys sang their deafening song.

Tex MacDowell was beside the car as soon as it had stopped. A mechanic stood next him, carrying a suit of flying coveralls.

"Sorry, Frances," said the lean Texan simply as he helped her out.

"Hustle into that toolroom at the end of the hangar, take off that skirt, and get into this suit," Fred ordered crisply.

Frances, her glorious hair half loosened already by the swift motor ride, ran off as directed.

"Everything ready, eh?" asked Fred as he put on his own helmet, which was held out to him by the mechanic.

"Uh-huh. And here's a map—we'll have to get Frances to locate the ranch for us. Here comes the major now, carrying half a ton of instruments and medicine. How about landing when we get there?"

"Cotton fields. Hi, major. Thanks a million times—"

"Don't bother after the first thousand," puffed the spry little medico. "Have this suit case wired on my ship," he ordered the mechanic, who sped away on his errand.

The DeHavilands, both with sergeants in the cockpits, were now roaring wide open in the final warm-up. As though they were living things, straining to be gone, the great tires flattened against the wheelblocks and on the end of each wing mechanics buckled

to their task of holding the ton and a half monsters back. On the tail of each ship another crew man hunched down, leaning against the terrific airblast from the six foot propellers.

Frances came up to them, her gray eyes starry with excitement. She looked like a slim goddess of the desert in the trim flying suit which swathed her lithe young body, with the golden hair whipping in the breeze.

Binder strapped her helmet for her and adjusted the big goggles.

"Just where is the ranch?" he bellowed above the roaring motors.

He held the map in his hand, and pointed out the railroad leading north from McMullen to San Antonio. Her finger indicated a spot about halfway between the Gulf of Mexico and the railroad, ten miles south of the branch line which ran toward the Gulf. The noise of the motors decreased gradually as the two crew chiefs drew the throttles back to idling speed.

"Do you know the country—I mean can you guide us there after we get within a few miles of the ranch?" demanded Binder.

"Yes, indeed—I'll know it, even from the air," she assured him.

MacDowell made a rapid calculation.

"About thirty degrees east of north," he remarked; and Binder nodded.

"Let's go," he said briefly.

He and Frances walked rapidly toward the nearest ship. He looked like a veritable denizen of the upper regions with his hawklike profile and tight fitting helmet, and she was conscious of a strange trust in him which quieted the natural excitement of what lay ahead.

The ship seemed like some monster of the air as they walked closer to it. The propeller was bigger than she was, and her head was far below the top of that tremendous motor which was now drumming along gently at idling speed. Even the fuselage was higher than she.

Binder showed her the footrest, and then helped her into the rear cockpit. He strapped the belt around her with practiced deftness.

"There's the rudder," he said, pointing to the wooden bar at her feet. "This is the control stick here, and this the throttle

and spark. Keep your hands on the sides of the cockpit and don't touch anything—feet flat on the floor.”

He got in the front seat, and as he strapped his belt turned around.

“If we get into any rain, keep your face covered,” he shouted, for sullen cloudbanks were piling heavily in the sky over toward the Gulf.

His practiced eye ran quickly over the crowded instrument board. The air pressure gauge showed two and a half pounds, and the oil was correct at fifteen pounds, considering the speed of the motor. The voltmeter was showing a one-point charge, and the Centigrade thermometer needle indicated a temperature of eighty degrees. His hand found the throttle and slowly eased it ahead. The tachometer needle crawled up to fifteen hundred revolutions as the pilot, with head bent, listened for a miss in the motor. Satisfied, he throttled down and nodded to the waiting crew. They jerked the wheelblocks loose, and at the end of the right wing helped him swing the ship around.

As he taxied to the northern end of the field for the take-off he saw MacDowell's plane trundling out behind him. With full rudder and a sudden burst of power he turned the DeHaviland close to the fence, and then fed it the throttle. His hand pressed forward on the stick until the tail came up and the roaring plane swept across the hard-packed sand at seventy miles an hour.

In a few seconds, feeling the speed with the infinitely delicate perception of the born flyer, he lifted the ship off the ground and then held it low, flying level to pick up speed. Fifty yards from the buildings rimming the southern edge of the airdrome the stick swept back and the DeHaviland arched smoothly upward in a zoom which brought the altimeter needle to two hundred feet.

Fred turned and smiled back at Frances. Her eyes were aflame behind the huge goggles, and beneath them her cheeks had been whipped by the air into lovely color. During those crowded moments between his reading of the telegram and the take-off Binder had not given a thought to the fact

that Frances had never been in the air before. He flashed a look of admiration at her now, for he remembered hundreds of cadets whom he had taken for their first ride.

“Thoroughbred—that's every bit of it,” he told himself, and suddenly the dull ache in his heart increased to a savage pain.

He settled to his work. With rudder and stick he threw the big bomber into a right bank, to circle the field. His hand drew the throttle back until the tachometer was reading fourteen hundred and fifty revolutions, which meant that the great motor was running well within itself. He kept within gliding distance of the field, MacDowell following, until he had reached fifteen hundred feet, and the field below was a small square surrounded on three sides by doll houses.

The Rio Grande was a twisting silver ribbon to the southward, and McMullen an animated, miniature settlement. Miles on the ground were like yards now—McMullen seemed but a step from the airdrome, and the river, really six miles southward, looked to be separated from the town by only a few small fields.

The instruments, delicate indicators of all that was taking place in that complex mechanism which held their lives in its power, showed that all was as it should be. The oil pressure had reached thirty pounds, the battery was charging three, and the temperature had gone to eighty-five. He adjusted the motor shutters to hold the temperature even, and then leaned down inside the cockpit for another brief session in which every faculty was concentrated on the rhythmic roar of the Liberty.

Satisfied, he swung northward and then to the east until the floating compass immediately before his eyes settled to rest at thirty degrees east of north, and the ship drove along toward that ominous cloudbank which blocked its way in ever increasing heaviness. Open fields slipped behind like magic, and seemingly endless billows of gray-green mesquite lay below. The ships were now hurtling across the kind of country which is the hazard of the border—no place to land if the motor fails. The slightest flaw in the Liberty meant crashing into

the trees at close to seventy miles an hour, which is the lowest speed at which a DeHaviland will keep the air.

Binder, however, taut with the realization of his precious cargo, could find no cause for uneasiness, for as the ship drove through the air the unbroken drum of the motor sang the sweetest song known to a flyer's ears—twelve mighty cylinders firing in tune.

The airspeed motor showed ninety-eight miles an hour, and they were an even mile high. The pilot's practiced eye scrutinized the storm clouds ahead. As he leaned over the side of the airblast a compound of their speed and the propeller wash hit him like a blow from an unseen hand. It would have been an impossibility to keep an arm extended from the cockpit.

There was no chance to climb above the storm, nor to go around it. It extended as far as he could see, and the clouds were piled to fifteen or eighteen thousand feet, easily. Binder looked around, and found Tex MacDowell's ship flying in formation with him, twenty-five feet back and the same distance above him. Fred pointed ahead. He could see the Texan's head peering over the side, and then MacDowell nodded. Hunching down farther in their seats, the airmen drove into the thickening mist.

In a moment goggles were fogging, and the ground below was nothing but a smudge. The ship began to tilt and strain in the air currents, and then it seemed that a million needles were pricking their exposed faces. Every drop of rain was a sharp physical pain, and little red blotches sprang into being.

The air currents, whirling into the vortex of the storm, had them in their grip. The ton and a half ship which had seemed so mighty to Frances on the ground was now nothing but a trembling leaf in the wind—a frail plaything in the hands of a giant. The ground was invisible, the mist so thick that the ends of the wings were but dimly outlined.

Binder was flying as he never had before. His feet were locked on the rudder bar, both hands on the stick. It seemed as though the elements were trying to wrench control

from him as the ship flashed upward or downward, now thrown into a steep bank and then again flung earthward with such power that the Liberty's efforts were momentarily abortive. The rain on his goggles blinded him, and the earth was out of sight—it seemed that such a thing did not exist as hard, level ground. With body and brain the pilot strove to counteract the invisible currents of that aerial whirlpool. Somewhere off in that churning mass of mist Tex MacDowell and the major were fighting their way through.

Frances's world was one formed of a roar which seemed to fill the universe, and a nightmare of menacing mist, torturing rain, and jagged streaks of lightning which momentarily split the glowering storm.

She tried not to think of the frail linen and wire and wood contrivance which upheld her; that just below the little wooden platform on which her feet rested there was nothing but linen which she could stick her finger through. The terrible power and menacing grandeur of the unchained elements were too much for her reeling brain. In all that titanic caldron of screaming wires and roaring motor and reverberating thunder, the center of the universe, her only connecting link with life was that immobile, helmeted figure ahead.

Then the mist thinned and the rain ceased. The ground became a pearl-gray mass below. Suddenly the ship hurtled into smiling sunlight and lazily floating cumulous clouds, masses of dazzling white. The drumming roar of the motor rose to a crescendo as though in exultation at its victory over the elements in had defied.

Frances wiped her goggles with her sleeve and looked back at the sullen, lightning streaked mass squatting darkly behind. As she watched a wraithlike shape took form in the seething story, and then, after a last tilt, which gave her the thought that the monster of the tempest was making a last effort to grasp the puny product of men and destroy it, the other DeHaviland emerged into the sunlight, the water on it flashing radiantly. With a spurt the ship drew up alongside, and the two men, like big-eyed gnomes, looked over at her. She could see Tex MacDowell throw back his

head and laugh—the incarnate spirit of the border patrol.

As she turned her head she met Fred's eyes. He smiled encouragingly, and then motioned at the ground. Suddenly the thought of her father swept over her, and her face whitened. With tightened lips she looked down at the flat panorama below, striving to locate herself. She knew every foot of the country, but from the air—

Five miles westward a familiar group of buildings met her eyes. The Morrison ranch. In a moment she had oriented herself and leaned over to touch Binder. She pointed northeast, and nodded her head. They were only ten miles from home.

In five minutes the tiny group of buildings and loosely strung series of clearings which were so familiar to her came in sight. Once again she signaled Fred, and he nodded. In another two minutes he was circling over the structures, sweeping widely to look over landing places.

It did not take him long to decide. There was a small, but apparently level, alfalfa field less than a quarter mile from the house. Although it was only two hundred yards long, the approach on the east was excellent—only a fence to get over. As he throttled the motor and started down in a shallow spiral he was aware of several tiny figures which had become motionless and were watching.

At five hundred feet he throttled still further. The whistle of the wires was audible above the motor as he increased the diving angle, five hundred yards east of the field. In a moment he was three hundred feet high and pointed for the landing.

Swiftly the ship dropped earthward, springing into life momentarily as Binder cleaned out the spark plugs with quick stabs at the throttle. At seventy-two miles an hour they cleared the fence by a hair, and were level, a foot above the earth. A quick pull backward on the stick, and the ship hit the ground on three points, and they were trundling over the cropped field.

Scarcely had they turned, twenty-five yards from the fence, than Tex skimmed over the barrier and hit the ground hard in a still landing. He taxied up beside them, goggles raised.

"Here we are, honey," said Fred, unconscious of the term of endearment he had used. "Forty-two minutes from McMullen."

He leaped out, having previously turned off the gas petcocks to run the gas out of the motor, and helped Frances. The motor died with a sputter and he clicked off the switches. MacDowell, having performed the same duty with his motor, was unwiring the major's bag.

"Fred, I'm going to run ahead," said Frances. Her face was without color, but her voice did not waver.

"Sure, we'll follow along with the major," returned Binder, and impulsively patted her shoulder. "The major's made a hundred busted flyers look like new, Frances," he added with a smile.

She ran swiftly across the field and vaulted the fence like a man. Fred noticed that a half dozen men were on their way to meet her.

He helped Tex get the suit case loose, and then the three airmen started for the house, Fred carrying the major's equipment. They made their way silently across the big cotton field which adjoined their landing place, each man busy with thoughts of the sufferer to whom they were going. Frances had stopped a moment as she reached the little knot of men ahead, and then continued to the ranch-house.

One short, bowlegged little man in a big sombrero came ahead to meet them.

"I'm Joe Knapp, foreman," he introduced himself. "We're shore thankin' you gentlemen—all of us."

"Don't mention it. We all know Frances, and we were glad of a chance to help," rejoined the major. "What is the matter with Mr. Cory, Knapp?"

"Broken leg, broken arm, and he seems to've kind o' ripped somethin' loose inside," explained the foreman. "He's in mighty bad pain, doc. Frances says if you'd come right on in—"

"Of course."

A group of curious punchers, Mexicans and negroes passed them, bound for the planes.

"You, Rocky, see that there don't nobody touch them things!" ordered the fore-

man, and a lanky, sandy-haired young fellow nodded.

They surveyed the flyers with lively curiosity, but the four men did not stop. They passed corrals, barns and sheds, and reached the veranda of the low, rambling ranch house.

"You go ahead in, major, and if there's anything we can do we'll be near by," said Fred.

Searles took the suit case and entered the house. The three men lounged over to the corral fence and seated themselves on the top rail.

"I reckon this here mind-over matter won't heal no broken legs, but if it could Frances's bein' here'd do more good'n the doc," observed Knapp, rolling a cigarette expertly. "The boss is shore lost when she's away."

"I should think he'd be used to it by now," remarked Fred. "She's been away at school and one thing and another for several years, hasn't she?"

"Hell, no!" laughed Knapp. "She did go up to the academy one year, but the old man was so down in the mouth she never went back. He tried to make her, but she says she don't want tuh go back noway. She knowed he needed her around. She goes away right frequent, a few weeks at a time, on visits, but most o' the time she's right here. Ever see her ride?"

Fred nodded. His mind was in a whirl. He had always thought of Frances as a perfectly gowned young society girl, and it was almost grotesque to think of her as spending most of her time on this isolated, rather run-down looking ranch.

Tex and Knapp talked casually of ranching while Fred remained immersed in thoughts which, from the expression on his face, were none too pleasant. The sun was sinking in a blaze of glory before the three men climbed down from their seats to meet Frances.

She laughed at the half wondering, half admiring stares of the two flyers. She was arrayed in khaki riding breeches and flannel shirt, with riding boots of shining leather.

"All I've got here to wear!" she said "Fred, the major is wonderful! He says

dad 'll get over everything all right, and he's in no pain now at all. Come in and meet him, both of you."

She chatted gayly as they entered the big, rather bare, living room, decorated with hunt trophies on the wall and showing the lack of a woman's hand in the barren disorder.

"Ching Lee can cook all right, but he can't keep things straight," she laughed. "He took every rug up so he wouldn't have to beat them. He always does that when I'm away."

They followed her into a big, sunny bedroom where a gaunt old man lay propped in pillows on an old-fashioned four-poster bed. He was white-haired, and his face stood out startlingly dark against the pillows.

"Dad, this is Fred Binder and Tex MacDowell," she said.

"Glad tuh know yuh, boys," he boomed, his puckered eyes twinkling. "Heard a lot about both o' yuh. I shore got treatment by modern methods, didn't I?"

Major Searles laughed.

"Lucky you did, Mr. Cory. Fred, I'm going to stay here until another doctor gets in. You can send up Sanders from McMullen—he and Mr. Cory are old friends."

"Well, we'd better be trotting along, Fred," remarked Tex after an interval. "The sun is sinking in the west, as the poets say, and we haven't got much time before dark. There's nothing we can do except send the doc on, is there, Frances?"

"No, but must you get back?" she asked, her face mirroring her disappointment.

"I've got the early morning patrol—"

"I must be on hand, too," put in Binder.

Frances walked with them to the ships. Tex MacDowell supplied a continuous line of drawing conversation, for which Fred was thankful. He could not account for his depression. It was fashioned of something besides his hunger for the glorious young Diana who walked beside him, as silent as he was himself.

Frances stopped by the fence that bounded the landing field. Around the ships was a swarm of ranch hands, mostly negroes and Mexicans of all ages.

"Daddy's already decided to sell the

ranch and live in McMullen," she answered. "The major said he could never ride or do anything strenuous again. When I get there maybe I can thank you both. I just can't now, but—it was wonderful of you!"

"We'll take your word for it," laughed Tex. "Speed the day of your return, Frances."

Fred shook hands, meeting her eyes with an effort.

"So-long," he said, and quickly leaped the fence.

He and Tex cranked each other's ship, to the great interest and delight of their audience. The warm-up was brief and insufficient, for lack of wheelblocks, and in five minutes they were taxying around for the take-off. Side by side the two De Havillands roared across the field like monstrous bugs, and took the air fifty yards from the fence. Darkness was so near that they did not take the time to circle the field for altitude, but headed directly for McMullen, eighty miles southward. Both flyers waved a farewell to the motionless figure by the fence, and then settled to their work.

Binder scarcely noticed the lapse of time, and it was a surprise when McMullen came into view ahead. Fred shook himself out of his frowning abstraction, and for a few moments forgot his problems in the always complicated business of landing.

IV.

A MONTH later the tall flyer drove up to the little bungalow which was the castle of Sheriff Bill Trowbridge. Frances and her father had arrived the day before, and were to make their home, at least temporarily, with the sheriff, who was an incurable and unregenerate bachelor, and likewise a lifelong friend of the ranchman. Trowbridge had hailed their advent with delight, and was endeavoring to convert them to his belief that the arrangement should be permanent.

It was just such a wonderful Texas night as had been on exhibition a month before—the night that Fred could never think of without a wrench at his heart. And, as before, Frances was awaiting him on the porch, very tall and white and lovely.

"I'm so glad to see you, Fred," she greeted him. "I've missed you."

"Well, I'm tickled to death at them kind words. How's Mr. Cory?"

"Coming along wonderfully. Just listen to the way he squabbles with Mayor Edwards and the sheriff inside there over stud poker, if you don't believe it. To see those three together is a sight for the gods."

"Sounds so," laughed the flyer, seating himself on the railing.

Mr. Cory's voice reached them.

"Sam, you contaminated old reprobate, I ought to crown yuh with one o' my crutches for makin' me lay down perfectly good sixes. Prosperity has done ruined yuh."

Frances laughed aloud.

"They squabble and argue and insult each other and have the time of their lives every minute," she said. "How is everything out at the field?"

"Going along as usual."

There was a moment's silence, during which Binder smoked thoughtfully, his eyes gazing unseeing at the floor.

"Frances, I guess this is good-by," he said presently, eyes on the glowing tip of his cigarette. "I've resigned, and I'm going to take what leave is due me right away and then trot back to Carrolton."

"Why, Fred! That is a surprise! What—"

It seemed that her voice was none too steady as she left the question unfinished.

"I ought to be back there—I've known it a long time and tried to kid myself along that it was right for me to be here. It's been a sort of tough decision—I don't mind saying that—but my mind's made up."

He threw away the cigarette and leaned back against the veranda post, staring into the darkness.

"You see, it's like this," he went on. "Dad died a few years ago, and of course mother has been dead longer than that. Dad had a furniture factory up in Carrolton, and since he died his old manager, Mr. Grady, has been running it for me. But he's getting old and he's been at me for a long time to get out of the army and settle down to business. The town depends on the factory—they're all real artisans who turn out the Binder hand-made furniture—"

and the thing is really more than a business—it's a tradition. And my place is back there.

"I hate to leave the air service, and if I live to be a hundred I'll never be prouder of anything than of the fact that I was in the air game when it was young and new. And on this border patrol."

He turned toward her again.

"I'm sure you'll understand, Frances, if I skip away from you to-night in about three minutes. I'm just a darn weakling, I suppose, but it makes it harder to be around you. I'm not big enough to play one of these 'brother' rôles with the girl I love, I guess. I'd rather be away and forget all about it."

"Is—is that why you're leaving—"

"Oh, Heavens, no! I'm going because New Hampshire's where I belong. You're responsible for my going, but in a different way. Frances, it's been a—a privilege to know you—I can't find the words, but you understand."

She came toward him slowly, until she was standing so near him that he could catch every shade of expression on her face. One hand rested on his arm.

"Fred, will you take me with you?" she asked, her starry eyes frank and unwavering as they met his astounded gaze.

"Why—why, Frances!" he stammered uncomprehendingly. "I—you—"

"I said no once, Fred, and it was the hardest thing I ever did in my life. I—no, dear, wait a minute!"

Her hands imprisoned the arms that would have enfolded her. Fred, his mind a maze of dizzy happiness, waited perforce.

"Fred, dear, I've always loved you, I think—so much that the thought of your being brought back to me, mangled or—or dead from some wreck was just too much. I couldn't have stood the long days, waiting and wondering and fearing. It was easier to give you up. And you loved it all so I wouldn't tell you, because I didn't want you to leave it because of my weakness. I could have died with you in that storm, dearest—but I don't want you up in any storms with me waiting down on the ground. If I'd said yes before, Fred, my happiness would have been spoiled because of hourly, daily fear that I would lose you, and now, instead of being half happy and half afraid, I'm just happy!"



MY LOVE COMES BACK TO ME TO-DAY

I TREAD the dandelions' gold;
 My heart is full as it can hold;
 A robin sings o'erhead, and I
 Sing back my own song in reply.
 Upon their nest, in flowering bush,
 His mate stays in the brooding hush,
 The purple plumes of lilac play,
 And with their blossoms strew my way.
 Far off, beyond the hemlock lane,
 A brown road winds across the plain.
 I watch that road, as waits the bird
 To feel the thrill of new life stirred.
 I hear, from one who haps along:
 "That lassie sings a foolish song!"
 But what care I for what they say?
 My love comes back to me to-day!

Cora A. Matson Dolson.



Woman with a Poppy

By HERMAN HOWARD MATTESON

Author of "The Key to the Kingdom," "The Silent Partner," etc.

CHAPTER XVI.

MORRIS MAKES ANOTHER WAGER.

THE flames crackled loudly within the hollow of the rude altar. Gundra Singh dispatched one of his men to patrol the beach, to watch for the coming of those who might interfere with the performance of the rites of ordeal.

Six Hindus, headed by the zealot Azad, knelt before the altar, let down their thick, black hair, and removed the *kara*, the *khanga*, and the *kanda*, the steel bangle, comb and dagger, insignia of the *sikh*, or lion fighting man.

In unison the six recited the bloody *credo*, then restored the bangle and comb to place, and wrapped the turbans on their heads. Holding the naked daggers in their hands, the six awaited the word of Gundra Singh.

Unfastening the ropes that bound Morris, the Hindus stood him upon his feet, then

forced him at the dagger point to kneel. Gundra Singh stepped forward. With bitterest invective, the uncontrolled frenzy of a madman, he denounced the Dong Lee for his perfidy to the Voy, and charged him directly with the murder of the faithful Gar Dar.

In spite of the prick of the dagger points, Morris struggled to his feet. He knelt to no man, or devil, or God, he said. He was still the Dong Lee of the Voy. To the arraignment of Gundra Singh, he replied only with sneers, taunts, and defiance.

"You brought me here to kill me," said Morris—"you warriors with your tin daggers. Why hesitate? You are a dozen. I am one. I have naked hands, and you have your tin daggers. Why hesitate?"

"But before your dozen lion hearts try their claws upon me, Gundra Singh, it might be well to deliberate, to weigh what advantage you would gain by my removal.

This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for May 26.

Many things I know, Gundra Singh, that you have thought I did not know.

"For example, I am advised that within one of the camphor wood chests, Tagore Singh, in Shanghai, very foolishly placed certain documents which, if once in the hands of the British Columbia authorities, will hang high as the reach of the longest rope in Westminster prison every tin dagger warrior that stands before me.

"Further, I chance to be aware of the fact that within the fancied security of your chosen circle, you, personally, offered a reward of fifty thousand dollars for the recovery of the four chests. Now permit me to add to your store of knowledge, Gundra Singh. The government of the province, it would appear, is twice as anxious as you are to secure the four chests, for they are about to publish an offering of a reward of one hundred thousand dollars.

"Ah, ha—the chief of the lion-hearted begins to think, to wonder! Gundra Singh begins to weigh his chances for the recovery of the chests, against the chances of the province, and the weight of probability rests with the province.

"Now I shall anticipate the question that is wrinkling your brow, Gundra Singh. You are about to demand whether I know the hiding place of the four chests. I do not, but I—I alone of all the Voy—have means for discovering that hiding place.

"Why, Gundra Singh, because I dearly love a wager if it be worth while, I would lay you my life against the four camphor wood chests. I mean it. If I do not recover the chests within a reasonable time, and destroy the papers placed there by Tagore Singh, why, I will borrow from one of your lion hearts a tin dagger, give myself a scratch, and then lie down to my rest upon the altar's warm, red bed."

Shrewdly Morris had touched Gundra Singh. The fact that it had become known that he had offered the big reward for the chests proved that some one whom he trusted was recreant to that trust.

Gundra Singh let his baleful eyes settle upon Gwen Barde, Mira Bai, Padnini—some of the women of the establishment—had prattled to Gwen Barde, and Gwen Barde had told the Dong Lee,

He shifted his gaze to Winnie. Here was another, infinitely more dangerous because, apparently, so guileless; she was the abject creature of the Dong Lee. This girl was dangerous.

Gundra Singh walked a little way apart. Presently Azad made bold to break in upon his master's deliberations.

"This man has been traitor to the Voy," said Singh. "We hold our own vows but lightly if we do not now exact the price."

Azad urged his chief to reconsider. Holding toward the Dong Lee surely no hate less than that of Gundra Singh, Azad for expediency's sake pleaded with the Fo Dong Lee to take the man Morris at his word and allow him time to discover the chests.

"The importance of recovering the chests, Gundra Singh, if we are sensible men, must far outweigh any motive of personal revenge. Take his wager. If he fails, we still have steel daggers—and there is wood in the forest to warm an altar."

"Then the two girls, Azad—what of them? Are they less dangerous than Morris?"

Azad lowered his voice to a whisper.

"We will make them ours. We will bend and fashion them to our purpose. If they are useful to Morris, shall they be less useful to us? There are ways, my honored chief. Do but think of the whipped spaniel licking the hand that smites it."

Gundra Singh lifted a hand and placed it affectionately upon the shoulder of Azad, the cobra-eyed.

"We will accept your wager, Morris," said Gundra Singh.

"Dong Lee, if you please," interrupted Morris haughtily. "Be good enough to remember that I am still the Dong Lee of the Voy."

"We accept the wager," continued Singh, ignoring the interruption. "You shall have to recover the four chests of Pen Yen until the moon is again in its first quartering, four weeks hence. Should you fail—"

Gundra Singh pointed dramatically to the fire leaping upon the altar.

Morris gave his head a contemptuous toss.

"We would better be going, my wives," he said, turning to Gwen and Winnie.

"Between thee and thy wives," offered Azad, who dearly loved the roll and cadence of pompous speech, "divorcement hath been said. Go you hence alone, Dong Lee Morris."

Making a gesture of mock supplication, Morris gave the girls a careless glance and walked away into the woods. At once Gundra Singh began his accusation against Winnie and Gwen Barde. Winnie, he declared, he held accessory in degree at least for the death of the faithful Gar Dar. At this preposterous unfairness Winnie broke in with passionate denial. Gundra Singh let her talk herself out, then continued. At any rate, the girl Winnie had been far too complaisant in following the orders of Morris, the execution of those orders being so inimical to the purposes of the Voy.

"Look here, Gundra Singh," Winnie retorted, "when you folks give me a heave down through that roof thatch, your very own selves you told me the Dong Lee was the skipper, and you was only mate. Now snub to that."

Azad, the cobra-eyed, lifted a hand to hide a smile. Gundra Singh turned to Gwen and directly accused her of conveying to Morris information calculated to strengthen him in his traitorous designs. Gwen, her hands folded, eyes bent upon the ground, made no answer.

By command of Singh, six Hindus, each armed with long poles, ranged themselves alongside the altar upon which fresh wood was heaped.

"All I got to say," said Winnie with withering sarcasm, though her face had grown a little pale, "all I got to say, Gwen, is we had a good, fair trial."

In the old Hindu rite of *suttee*, of *jahar*, the fiery death, the victim flings herself upon the burning altar. Then, lest her writhings cheat the flames of their due, the guards standing by lower the long pole and hold the thrashing body in place until it is still.

The histrionic soul of Azad must have exulted at the success of his plan to terrify the two girls. Pale as death now, Gwen and Winnie clung to each other while they turned eyes of horror upon the leaping flames.

Somewhat similarly affected, it would seem, had been another, a silent spectator. As Gundra Singh commanded the girls to kneel and shrive themselves by full confession, the lath and canvas Ganese tipped over with a crash, and from out of its roomy interior sprang Bigpaw Lacey, a handcuff and bit of chain dangling from one wrist, a handcuff upon the other.

Before the assembled Hindus could reach the stack of old-fashioned rifles leaning against a tree, Bigpaw was in the midst of the six pole-armed guards. One he seized and flung against the red hot stones; a second he got by the throat.

Wildly the remaining guards struck with the poles, but they were too long and heavy for effective work. A pole broke in two. Bigpaw possessed himself of the free portion, and in one terrific, flailing swing cleared himself a space.

"Run, Win! Run!"

Bigpaw swung a hand behind him, plucked Azad off his back, and tossed him into the press.

"Run, Win! Run!"

Frantically the girls ran out of the wood and down the sand spit in the direction where the yacht was moored.

"Run!"

Bigpaw was bleeding from a dagger thrust in the arm, a cut across his scalp.

"Run, Win!"

The Hindus rushed him in mass, swarmed over him and bore him down.

And Winnie had run. Straight to where the jagged reef gave off into deep water she ran, dove, and came up swimming the powerful crawl that she, Del, and Bigpaw had swum since they had been knee-high to a *smetook* clam.

Up the sea ladder she climbed to the yacht's deck, dashed into the after cabin and out again. Cautiously, holding one hand high, she lowered herself into the water and swam with one hand back to the rock. At the rock Gwen attempted to stay her.

"Bigpaw will be needing help by now," she shrilled. "I aim to go! I will go!"

She flung off Gwen's hand and ran for the wood. The big old *sukwalal* began to thunder, hurling thick leaden slugs.

Now came running toward the altar the Hindu who had been patrolling the beach. Dories were coming—two dories, with white men.

The Hindus, save one who lay upon the ground before the altar, seized their rifles and scattered into the woods. Bigpaw, limping a trifle, went back with Winnie toward the rock reef where Gwen still stood. He rather consciously accepted the praises of the girls for having saved them—as they verily believed, from a horrible fate.

"Just luckylike," responded Bigpaw, "seen them three fires the turban top was keeping on the beach. So I takes and grabs a dory, and away I come. Don't know as I ever had a snugger hiding place than the inside of that elephant party."

From the woods came the sound of desultory firing.

Bear Dancer, whatever his faults, did play the game. Upon escaping, he had rowed the skiff straight to Point Roberts, and had roused out Ninetoos, Cultus Kennedy and Billy Davenport, and the party had returned to Sucia. Morris, crouched back in the wood at the lower end of the island, had noted their coming with grim satisfaction.

"Now we've got them," he said, as Dancer led his crew up the slope of beach, "Gundra Singh and the whole outfit! Don't bother to take any prisoners. It costs too much to feed them. Scatter."

Bigpaw, cocking his ear to the sound of shooting, turned and pointed to the yacht.

"Most healthiest place we can get is aboard," he declared. "I'll take and get a raft off."

With his uninjured hand he began heaving upon a log that the tides had lodged in the rocks. Gradually he worked it into the water. Balancing themselves precariously, paddling with sticks, the three ferried themselves out to the Lalla Rookh.

From behind rocks and trees, the guerrilla warfare between Morris and Gundra Singh continued. Vastly superior as to fighting ability, the Morris crowd was greatly outnumbered. The tide of warfare began to turn against them. Repulsed twice in the effort to break through Gundra Singh's line and get aboard the yacht, Morris withdrew

what remained of his band to the upper end of the island.

Cultus Kennedy and Billy Davenport lying dead in the wood, Morris ordered Ninetoos and Bear Dancer into a dory and climbed in after them. The three made off in the direction of Point Roberts.

Bigpaw, advised by Winnie of the partially repaired shaft, descended to the engine hold and went to work to complete the task of keying the shaft and coupling it up. The bit of chain swinging from the left-hand handcuff hampered him. He called up the companionway for Winnie to come below.

"Win, you take and hold the cold chisel, and whack 'er good with that machinist's hammer. That's the pucker to catch fish. Good. Now the other one. Fine. Just like now I wasn't a prominent burglar and hadn't never been in jail."

Bigpaw dropped to his knees and began to drill away at the site of the key seat. Winnie, hearing a step upon the stair, turned her head. Gundra Singh was looking in upon them. Bigpaw promptly possessed himself of a Stilson wrench, and fronted him for battle.

Gundra Singh held up a conciliatory hand. He would declare a truce, the big man need have no fear. The big man, who at no time had felt any fear, rested the end of the wrench upon the work bench.

"All right," said Bigpaw, "we'll talk turkey. Let's hear your *wawa*."

Gundra Singh proceeded to explain to Winnie that the demonstration at the altar had been made only to impress the girls, frighten them, give them to understand that their fealty belonged to the honest Voy, not to a rascal who would ruin the order for his personal gain.

Finally, Singh's proposition was to the effect that the big man complete the repairs to the shaft, operate the boat, and run them all into Vancouver.

"We shall be quite within our rights," said Singh, "for this yacht was bought with money stolen from the Voy."

Bigpaw looked at Winnie, and Winnie returned the scrutiny. After a thoughtful pause, she said: "I'm agreed, if you are, Bigpaw."

Bigpaw, who didn't at all fancy the manner in which Gundra Singh was eying Winnie, finally consented. So he finished keying the shaft, put in the coupling, and started up the engine. He remained below to stand by the engine while Winnie took her place in the pilot house.

After a time Gundra Singh followed Winnie and began to talk to her graciously and affably upon subjects far removed from any of the very recent unpleasant occurrences.

As he talked, his somber eyes rested fixedly upon Winnie. Mira Bai, he reflected, while a beautiful girl, entirely lacked the fire, color and animation of this girl. By gentle degrees he brought the talk around to the subject of Del, Winnie's brother. Del, Singh said, had kept faith with the honest faction of the Voy. He need have no fear.

Further, Gundra Singh asked Winnie whether she had any intimation that Del would know anything of the hiding place of the Pen Yen.

"There is a possibility that your brother Bel for—we will not say dishonest motive—spied upon Gar Dar and learned the hiding place of the four chests. Gar Dar declared to Azad that Del had not come ashore when the Pen Yen was put overside from the Empress. I can conceive that Del might have swum ashore and secreted himself in the brush without Gar Dar's knowledge."

Winnie turned upon the stool where she was seated before the tiller wheel and gave Gundra Singh a frank look.

"I have no idea where my brother is," she said, "nor have I any idea whether he knows about the Pen Yen. I'm a lot anxiously than you, Gundra Singh, to find my brother."

Bigpaw, gazing from the port light in the engine room, began to wonder why Winnie was steering a course so erratic. She wasn't holding to her reckoning. He walked to the companionway leading to the pilot house. In the middle of it he paused.

Some one was talking to the pilot. No wonder she steered wildly. Poor sailing to allow any one in the house. He leaned his head against the door. Gundra Singh was in the pilot house with Winnie.

"I will make you as comfortable as possible," Gundra Singh was saying. "Then you can take up the search for your brother. I am positive that we shall get along very well now that we understand one another."

Bigpaw returned to the engine room. What did the turban top mean, make Winnie comfortable? He took a look from the port. Patos Light lay fair astern. On the starboard bow, he could see the outline of Boundary Bluff. He looked at the engine room clock. Nine o'clock. Then they weren't more than a mile off the shore of home, and the tide was flooding in.

Cautiously he opened the sliding door that led into the pilot house. Gundra Singh had departed. Winnie was alone. Bigpaw stepped into the house, gathered Winnie up in his arms, walked to the yacht's rail and deliberately flung her overboard. When Winnie came sputtering to the surface and struck out she found Bigpaw swimming along beside her.

Her first exceedingly angry exclamation was about all the fine clothes that she had left behind on the yacht. Swimming along beside her, Bigpaw meekly took the fiercest tongue lashing that he had ever received.

Bigpaw, never daring now to confess that he had been jealous of Gundra Singh, tried to get in a word.

"I kind of thought, Win—you see, I took and—'vast, while I catch a word, Win—"

Win refused to "vast," but sputtered on.

The yacht, circling crazily when it found no hand at the wheel, had again settled to its course. Winnie and Bigpaw swam on, and after a time landed upon the beach near the cabin. But Winnie hadn't talked herself out. Neither had the chill salt water of Puget Sound sufficed to cool her wrath.

All the nice clothes were on board; she would never, never have any more like them.

"Clothes! Look, Win, I'll take and buy you all the clothes you want."

"Yes," she flared back hotly, "with stolen money."

Bigpaw's head jarred back as from a blow. He stood staring at her.

"I s'pose Gavin's money is a lot cleaner than mine."

Bigpaw turned and walked to the bunk house. Winnie entered the cabin.

There she began to feel a little ashamed of herself. If she had not so passionately given way to anger, she would have told Bigpaw that her desire to go on to Vancouver with Gundra Singh indicated no interest whatever in the Hindu, but only a wish on her part to find Del. She had hurt Bigpaw frightfully with her remark about the stolen money. Really, she felt that Bigpaw had stolen no money. Just the same she had accused him.

Bigpaw, genuinely hurt by Winnie's speech, seated himself upon the edge of the bunk. By degrees his anger against her subsided. He tried to put himself in her place. Always she had sacrificed, denied herself. She had scrimped and saved to enable Del to go away to school and to provide Del with good clothes in order that he might not be shamed before his schoolmates. Yes, Winnie had remained at home, dug and saved, to let Del have clothes and go to school.

Bigpaw began to see where the outfit of suits and shoes and so on were a mighty lot more important to Winnie than he could have believed possible.

"I've went and done a mud-head play," he accused himself. "All I can see is me to go squandering into Vancouver, take and get them clothes off the ya't for Win, and fetch 'em home."

That very thing he would do. He would privately get Winnie's things off the yacht, and then, to avoid any misunderstanding in the future, hunt up Gundra Singh and gently break the news to that dusky gentleman that unless the dusky one desired to have his back broken in about six places, why the dusky one must never, never venture to offer Winnie any soft-lover talk again.

Visualizing to himself the plan whereby he would get Winnie's clothes for her, Bigpaw in the early morning went to the supply shed, cut off a six-fathom length of heavy trawling cord with his knife, put it in his pocket, and started toward Nickomekl.

Morning brought to Winnie no weakening of purpose to regain possession of all the pretty clothes. They were hers. She had earned them. She proposed to have them.

Winnie also had evolved a plan whereby she believed that she could gain possession of her effects on the yacht without the knowledge even of a watchman on board, should one be stationed.

She went to the supply shed. She uncoiled about six or seven fathoms of the heavy trawl line and, having no knife, sawed it off against a rusty nail.

Then, with the cord in her pocket, garbed in one of her own simple, homely, cheap dresses, she started through the wood toward the railway.

When the northbound train came in she boarded it. Just before the train reached the Fraser River and began to slow down for the trestle, Winnie caught sight of a man walking beside the track. The momentary flash that she got of him brought familiar associations. The man looked like Bigpaw. But she must have been mistaken.

Arriving in Vancouver, Winnie debated. Finally she concluded that she would go to the Voy rooms and make certain that Gundra Singh, Azad and the others had left the yacht. She wished, too, to get in touch with Gwen Barde.

Arriving at the door without a handle, she took a furtive look up and down the street, touched the secret button and entered.

CHAPTER XVII.

A LENGTH OF TRAWL LINE.

WITHIN the doorway, as Winnie entered, stood Padnini, the woman of Benares, leaning upon her heavy cane. As Winnie started to pass, the woman reached as if to touch Winnie's arm, bid her stay, but she thought better of it. A strange light was in the inscrutable depths of her eyes as she watched Winnie ascend the stair that led toward the Voy room.

Something Padnini would have said to Winnie, but she dared not. Upon a former occasion Padnini had let her tongue wag. For that indiscretion she had dearly paid and would pay during the remainder of her days.

As Winnie entered the great room of the Voy, she caught sight through the open door

of Gwen Barde talking with Mira Bai. Uttering an exclamation, Gwen came swiftly to Winnie.

"I am so glad," said Gwen, taking Winnie's warm hand between her own cold palms, "so glad. Gundra Singh is not in at present. This is really my first opportunity for a word with you alone. Sit here, please."

Gwen seated herself upon the divan and motioned for Winnie to join her.

"I—I think I have good news," whispered Gwen. "I—and I alone—know where your brother Del is. Where he is, I will say, I am responsible for his being."

Gwen paused and looked over her shoulder apprehensively. In the faintest whisper she continued:

"I found Del wandering the streets of Vancouver in a wretched state. For that state I was responsible, I alone. Touched to the soul by what you had said to him—you, his sister—he had attempted to do away with himself. He jumped from the deck of the Empress as it was rounding into Burrad Inlet. But he lost his nerve. The poppy slave has no nerve, no courage, no soul, for he has bartered them all to the ghostly woman.

"Del, afraid to die, made shore some way. He doesn't know how, but he came into Vancouver. Here I found him—I who had made him what he—"

Gwen paused. A tender, hopeful smile formed upon her lips.

"Very nearly I said: 'what he is.' I shall amend and say: 'I made him what he was. Can you guess, Winnie? Can you guess? Can you? I placed him in a private sanatorium some distance from here. Your brother is himself again. Quite himself.'"

Impulsively Winnie flung her arms about Gwen and crushed the girl to her bosom.

"He is quite himself. And ere long I shall be myself again. Oh, I am resolved. Somewhere within me I have left a spark of courage.

"But I must end my story. Gundra Singh is expected. Because of the reward offered by Singh, the reward offered by the province, Del will be sought for high and low. Moncrief Morris will stop at nothing to locate Del to torture from him—

what? Del swears upon his soul that he knows nothing of the hiding place of the four chests. Morris will never believe that. Lately, Gundra Singh has come to believe that Del knows. Can you not see, Winnie, the danger that, under constant hounding and persecution, Del might go back, for it will be weeks—months before his nervous organization becomes absolutely normal. I dare not risk having him subjected to the ordeals. So, I—the fact is, Winnie, we are going away, Del and I—a long way from here. A long way from here."

Again Gwen paused to listen.

"It will be better for you if you can say in truth that you do not know where Del is and where I am. For the present we shall keep secret our whereabouts. Later you will hear from us. You will know that we are all right, that we are ourselves, growing every day in strength, hope, and—yes—love. I love your brother, Winnie, and he loves me.

"But I must go. Say nothing of this talk. Simply say, if questioned, that you know nothing of our whereabouts. What shall I say to Del for you, Winnie?"

"Tell him I love him. Tell him I say a prayer for him every night. Tell him I know the day will come when you and him will both come to the cabin, and you, too, and Bigpaw and me, we'll sing, and Bigpaw will play, and we'll eat wild blackberry pie till we nearly bust. Tell him—tell him—I love him."

Gwen kissed Winnie, and walked swiftly down the hall. Within the door, sat Padmini, leaning upon her stick. Gwen pressed a kiss also on the brow of the former Nautch dancer, and passed into the street.

Flirting the tears from her eyes, Winnie arose from the divan. She would ascertain from Mira Bai the whereabouts of Gundra Singh and Azad by adroit questioning, learn the berthing place of the Lalla Rookh and whether watch were maintained upon the craft at night.

Winnie's plan for the recovery of her effects seemed simplicity itself. She would hire a boat that night, row down the bay in the darkness and drift in under the overhang of the Lalla Rookh. She would make her skiff fast to the yacht's tiller

chains. Standing upon the guard rail of the yacht on the side away from the dock, she would work open the port opening into the after cabin. No trouble there—she recalled distinctly that the catch on the cabin port would not fasten. She would do the things up in bundles and lower them by the trawl line into the rowboat. Then she would crawl back to the boat, cast off, and row away.

It couldn't fail. Even with a watch on board she believed that she could work it.

She opened the door leading toward Gundra Singh's private apartments.

Mira Bai was standing at the far end of the hall. As Winnie lifted her hand to beckon to the girl, a side door opened and Gundra Singh stepped into the hall.

Looking quickly to right and left, he beheld the girls. Giving Mira Bai a scowl, he turned toward Winnie, his dark face lighting. Swiftly he came, playfully urged Winnie back into the Voy room and closed the door.

Almost instantly the secret slide in the wall opened noiselessly, and two dark eyes, glittering with unspeakable hatred, looked in to where Gundra Singh had drawn Winnie down beside him upon the divan.

The Fo Dong Lee laid his hand upon Winnie's hand. Angrily she shook it off and started to rise.

"I must go now," she said.

Gone when next he spoke was the gentle playfulness of Gundra Singh.

"It is my wish that you remain," he said.

Winnie shrank back against the wall and began to edge her way toward the door. Gundra Singh lifted the bronze bell from the tabouret and rang it sharply.

Winnie could hear a door close, then another, then the rasp of bolts sliding into place.

Bigpaw's anger against Winnie began to cool. In no degree however, did he abandon his purpose to see Gundra Singh and pass him a word to 'vast thereafter on all woman palaver with Winnie.

Near the Fraser River the northbound train passed him. Sight of the people cool and comfortable upon the observation made Bigpaw regret that he hadn't taken a chance

on being recognized by the train crew and riding on into Vancouver. There was no warrant for him in Canada.

A freight had been in siding waiting for the passenger to pass. Now it backed out and started to follow. Bigpaw swung onto the steps of the caboose, held out a palm filled with silver, and told the conductor to help himself.

Almost as soon as the passenger, the freight pulled into Vancouver.

Bigpaw had a simple plan for getting Winnie's things. He would locate the yacht, get a boat, row to the craft, gather up Winnie's effects, lower them into the boat, and row away. That would be all there was to it.

He could locate the yacht easily after dark; in fact preferred night for his observations. But he might not so easily find Gundra Singh after dark. It wouldn't do at all to return to Point Roberts without passing warning to Singh concerning Winnie. But he had not the slightest idea where Gundra Singh could be found.

A direct actionist always, Bigpaw stepped up beside a motor truck that had drawn in by the curb.

"Ahoy, mate! Can you give me the reckoning where in the roadstead the Hindus heave their hook?"

The truck driver grinned. The truck driver had worked a season as a decker on a cannery tender, and knew the jargon.

He pointed. It was three squares that way, and three to the left. There, in that section, the Hindus dwelt. Bigpaw sailed fair for three squares, then for three squares beat to wind'ard. This would be the section.

He walked along the sidewalk, keenly scrutinizing the store fronts on the opposite side of the street. A door opened in what appeared to be a dead wall. A girl came out and hurried up street.

Bigpaw started to run and follow her. The girl was the girl Winnie called Gwen Barde.

But Bigpaw had sense enough to know that, even if there were no warrant out for him in Canada, the less wake of racket he made, the harder it would be to follow his course.

Crossing the street, Bigpaw hunted for the door through which Gwen had come upon the street. Finally he found it. Mighty funny, a door without knob or latch. He knocked upon the door, leaned upon it, sagged his weight against it until it creaked.

Again he knocked. No answer.

Crossing the street, he took a careful survey of the building which contained a door without a knob. Figuring out the topography of the thing, he went to the corner and turned up the alley. He would have a look at the place from abaft and see how it sized up.

Down the alley, just turning in to some rear entrance, was a turbaned figure. Bigpaw called, "Ahoy, Gundra Singh!" He started to run toward the Hindu, but Gundra Singh had entered a door and closed it after him.

Again a mystery. Here was a second door without a knob. And, also, knocking at this portal of mystery elicited no response. Bigpaw turned down a side alley, a very narrow thing. A stair led up from the narrow alley, and from the platform at the top a ladder ascended to the roof.

Standing upon the roof whence the ladder left, Bigpaw studied the quarterings of the compass. Unless he was several points off in variation, the roof adjoining would be the roof of the house that had two doors without knobs.

Concluding thus, he stepped across the space which separated the two adjoining roofs and took a look down through the skylight.

No one in the room. Nice carpets, some little tables, little six-sided stands, pictures on the wall, a bed thing at one end with an awning over it, and a couple of side lights hanging from brass yards.

He pressed his face a bit closer to the skylight and cupped his hands to shut out the light. There, in the corner, upon the wall was another picture, picture of a gross bodied man, surmounted with an elephant's head.

From a rather vivid recollection, Bigpaw associated the elephant headed man with Hindu hocus-pocus. This was the place.

He would sit down, wait for some Hindu to appear, give him a hail and tell him to send Gundra Singh aloft for a talk.

It was getting dark. Bigpaw had about concluded to abandon his purpose to wait any longer when the squeal of some flute-like instrument sounded faintly from below. He pressed his face to the glass. The drapery at one end of the room parted, and a girl, wearing a veil over her face, a little jacket, turned up funny shoes, and baggy silken trousers came dancing into the room followed by six other girls similarly clad.

While the seven girls circled about the room, a tall, turbaned figure entered. By his side was a woman, veiled, wearing a rig somewhat similar to that of the dancers, but finer.

One of the girls danced her way out of the room and danced back again holding in her hand a seven-armed candelabrum, with seven lighted candles.

She placed the candelabrum on one of the funny little tables. Then the dance went on, livelier, and the flute squealed a trifle louder.

A girl danced to the fore, blew out a candle, danced her way out, and did not return. A second danced up and blew out a candle. Another and another.

One candle only burned in the candelabrum. The last girl—she wore a splendid blazing jewel upon her forehead—danced up before the divan. Instead of at once blowing out the last candle, she whisked the veil from the face of the woman seated beside the Hindu.

It was Winnie. Winnie! She was pale as death, trembling violently. There was a faint bruise near her right eye. Winnie!

As the last candle went out, Winnie felt herself seized in a fierce embrace. There was a crash of glass. She struggled. As she thrust Gundra Singh away with all her strength, one hand got tangled into something, a heavy cord or small rope. Winnie gave a fierce yank upon the cord.

She could feel Gundro Singh's clasp upon her arm relax. Then other, groping hands, great, muscular hands found her.

"It's me, Win! Bigpaw. Come on! We got to warp out of here!"

She led him to the door—the door op-

posite the draperies. It was locked. Bigpaw, with one heave of his shoulder, tore it from the hinges.

Down the stairs they ran, and on through the hall. The outer door stood open a crack. Into the street they dashed and turned into an alley, many curious eyes following the remarkable spectacle of a girl in sheer silk-en trousers, a little gold thread bordered jacket and turned-up, gilded shoes, led by a giant in corduroy.

Keeping still to the alley, they crossed a second street. They were nearing the water front. Reaching the row of wharf and wharf sheds, they turned to the left, away from the more frequented section. They came to a place where scaffolding used to repair the wharf timbers had been left in place. Out upon the stringers they went, and Bigpaw lowered Winnie to the platform below.

The girl was crying hysterically. Some appalling horror still had her in its terrifying spell.

"Don't leave me, Bigpaw! Don't! Please don't!"

His coat wrapped about her shivering form, and his arms as well, Bigpaw held her all night long, whispering comfort to her and assurance that she need not fear—that he would never, never leave her.

At daybreak Bigpaw crept out to take an observation. A morning paper lay upon the doorstep of a wharf office. Bigpaw picked it up and spelled out the headlines:

HIGH CASTE HINDU MURDERED.

**Gundra Singh Strangled with Bit of Trawl
Cord—Upon Information Given by a
Nautch Girl, Warrant Is Issued
for Arrest of American Girl**

Bigpaw laid the paper back upon the step. A baker's wagon was coming down the wharf, on its way to supply bread to some ship's commissary. As it passed, Bigpaw noticed that the rear door swung upon the hinges. He jumped out into the road and helped himself to two loaves of bread. Then he crawled back down onto the platform.

"Here, Win. Take and see if you can

eat a bite. We got to lay hove to till I can get you some clothes, till a chance comes for us to beat it."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MORRIS'S STAR ASCENDANT.

DEATH, the great dissolver, had taken hence one whom they revered. What a shameful death for one of lion heart, to die like a felon, a noose about his neck.

Mira Bai would not be comforted. Gundra Singh had been her lord. She would follow him to bliss through the fiery gate. But Azad gravely admonished her. The white man's law forbade the rite of *suttee*. Already the Voy was uncomfortable under police surveillance. Mira Bai must deny herself the ecstasy of joining Gundra Singh; must live on.

Upon a funeral pyre in the wood, some miles from Vancouver, the faithful laid the body of the lion heart, and added shrill lamentations to the crackle of the flames.

Even after the others had arisen from their kneeling, Azad remained prone before the altar, swearing vows to Kali, Ganese, Indra and Vishnu to carry on in his frail hands the burden laid down by Gundra Singh.

The little company of the faithful were seated about the floor of the Voy room. They were seeking guidance. Out of the silence presently would come inspiration to name a fitting successor to Gundra Singh. With the apostacy of Morris and the death of the lion heart, the Voy was without a chief.

A turbaned head lifted itself.

"A voice speaks to me from out the silence, and the name it names is 'Azad, the cobra-eyed.'"

"I also have heard a voice," spoke another, "and the name it named was 'Azad, the cobra-eyed.'"

The draperies were flirled aside. A man was standing in the doorway staring in insolently upon that little company, a sneer upon his face. He lifted a hand, and made an imperative gesture.

Instinctively those present answered with the hailing sign and the word of salutation, "Namaskar."

"What need for all this profound deliberation?" demanded the man in the doorway. "I still am the Dong Lee of the Voy. Let that fact be not forgotten."

Haughtily Morris crossed the floor and took his seat upon the divan.

"I am still the Dong Lee. What differences lay between me and Gundra Singh passed with his passing. I require you now, all of you, to renew to me, as Dong Lee, your oaths of allegiance."

One by one the Hindus arose and passed from the room, for they would not swear allegiance to Moncrief Morris. All save Azad, the cobra-eyed. Azad remained cross-legged upon the floor, his bright, beady eyes fastened upon the sinister face of Moncrief Morris.

"You would stand by me, 'Azad, and give me your word?"

"I would do even so."

"Then kneel before Kali, most terrible of your gods, and swear."

Azad knelt before Kali, the naked, dancing black woman. But even as he knelt, Azad, from beneath his turban, slyly withdrew the *kanda*, the sacred dagger of steel. For a lion heart to swear without the sacred *kanda* in his hair is no oath, but only idle jest.

At once Morris sent Azad forth to gather together the faithful members of the Voy, to renew their oath to Morris, the Dong Lee.

More than a dozen responded, but among them were none of the Hindus who had arisen at Morris's entrance, and walked from the room.

Mira Bai, summoned by Morris, recounted the circumstances of the last hours of Gundra Singh. Gundra Singh had sought to exalt the white girl, Winnie, by making her his honorable wife. The white girl, with obdurate, perverse spirit, had fought them like a wild cat. But they had disrobed her and had dressed her in the nuptial garb.

When the women of the establishment were making Winnie ready for the marriage rite a roll of strong string had fallen from

her dress. Mira Bai recalled distinctly seeing the bit of strong string lying upon the floor. Then, presently, the bit of string was gone. The white girl had cunningly recovered the string and hidden it about her person. That bit of string, Mira Bai would swear to all the gods, was the string that had ended the life of the lion heart.

"But here, master," added Mira Bai earnestly, "is a circumstance that in truth I must relate. When the crash of breaking doors, the hurry of flying feet, marked the escape of the murderess, and we came with lights to find our lord hanging like a thief to the brass lamp arm, upon the floor here, just beyond the divan was a second bit of the strong string, like in every detail to the string that had taken the life of Gundra Singh.

"I summoned the white men police. I gave into their hands the string that I had found upon the floor. The police have now in their possession the string that I gave to them, and its mate that sent the soul of Gundra Singh to bliss. I—"

One of the Nautch girls glided into the room and held up a warning hand. "The police have come again," she whispered. "They are now below stairs."

"Tell them the story again, just as you have told it to me," admonished Morris. "Say nothing of the fact that I have been here."

Entering the private rooms that had been Gundra Singh's, Morris, as the police came clumping up the stairs, slid back a panel in the wall, disappeared through it, and closed it after him.

Listening for a moment at the door which opened into the alley, Morris presently appeared, walked swiftly to the intersecting street, and mingled with the throng of pedestrians.

Deep in thought, Morris walked toward the water front. He was thinking of Winnie, marveling that, clad so conspicuously, she had been able thus far to evade the police.

What Morris did not know—what no one in the Voy establishment had known save only one, Padnini—was that Winnie had been aided in her escape by a giant of a man with extraordinarily thick wrists. Padnini,

for some reason, had said nothing of the presence of Bigpaw.

Morris wished to locate the Lalla Rookh. He could imagine no reason why the police should in any manner link the yacht with the murder, or with circumstances leading to the murder. But he wanted to locate the craft.

Presently he found it. Casually Morris walked past it, turned, and repassed it. No watch on board. It lay there at its berthing, a splendid pleasure craft of a gentleman. No one would ever dream of connecting it with the murder of Gundra Singh.

Winnie had escaped clad in a little jacket and silken trousers. Thus far she had evaded the police, but she could not hope indefinitely to avoid capture, dressed as she was.

Morris tried putting himself in her place. In her place, he would have sought first a change of clothing. What more natural than that she would think of the many garments that were within the walls of the after cabin of the Lalla Rookh.

Nearly opposite the bow of the yacht was a space between two wharf sheds. Within the space it was dark. There Morris took his place to watch the Lalla Rookh.

Gwen, after she had bidden Winnie good-by in the Voy room, had passed through the knobless door to the street. At a corner she stopped a taxi and directed the driver to take her to her apartment house.

Dismounting from the taxi before the apartment she ascended to her rooms. She packed two bags and had the hall boy carry them to the taxi for her. On the way uptown she stopped the taxi before a branch of one of the large Dominion banks.

Back in the machine she directed the driver toward an environ of the city. Several miles into the country the taxi went. Finally it turned in through a gate, where a long, rambling house lay hidden behind a dense screen of tall fir and cedar trees.

Gwen entered the office and spoke to the white-capped nurse. The nurse conducted Gwen to a reception room and presently Del Dellinger stood in the doorway smiling in upon Gwen.

"I am as right as a new compass, Gwen," he said joyously.

He took both her hands in his. She bent her head and the tears fell upon their clasped hands.

"I, too, am going to be all right," she said, smiling up at him bravely. "We shall help, strengthen and encourage one another.

"It is worth going through what I have been through, Gwen, just for this."

He gave her hands a press and then kissed her tenderly.

A few moments later the taxi was headed back for the city. Long before the street lights became visible it had grown quite dark.

Within the car Gwen and Del discussed plans for their departure.

"We must leave no trace whatever, Del," said Gwen earnestly. "Morris, because he believes that you know the hiding place of the four chests, will hunt you down without mercy. Gundra Singh has come to believe that you may know the location of the chests, and he, too, will join the chase with all his numerous minions. The province is offering a large reward for the recovery of the chests, and from that source enters a new danger.

"Aside from that, I have a selfish reason—fear. I stole the yellow labels that got the chests past the officials in Shanghai. That fact may develop. Having all these circumstances in mind, Del, I can see no argument save one counselling flight."

Del, after a thoughtful pause, nodded his head in agreement.

"Now it remains to devise means to get away from the city without leaving any trace," said Gwen. "There are hundreds of islands in Puget Sound and up the coast of Alaska. Even on the map, Del, they seem to offer sanctuary. The islands, Del. At first the more remote islands off Vancouver. Then we can buy a boat, go up the Alaska coast, and there remain until we have worked out our salvation."

Del gave her hand an earnest pat. The islands did offer sanctuary.

"Now the plan, Del. You will put up at some quiet hotel for the night under an assumed name. In the early morning I will go to the water front and charter a boat.

We will board the boat and have the boatman take us to—say, Galiano, or Gabriola.

"There we will discharge him and hire another boat to take us on a bit further."

Eagerly Del agreed. Del remained in his hotel the next morning until Gwen called for him.

As she entered the hotel, ascended to the parlor where she was to meet him, she flung away a morning paper that she had bought and read. Instantly Del became concerned over her paleness and the shaking of her hands.

"The police have been through the Voy rooms," said Gwen. "Something has happened. I—I fear that it would be unwise for me to charter a boat. We just can't be defeated now, Del. We must not."

She pressed her quaking hand to her lips. Was she doing wrong or right in withholding from Del the news that Winnie was sought as the murderer of Gundra Singh? She was doing right. A shock now might send him back to the slavery of the poppy woman. The doctor had said so. She must keep the news from him and get him away. But how get him away, with the police alert?

"There is only one plan, Del, that seems safe to me."

Gwen advanced her lips to Del's ear and whispered: "We will wait for night and take the Lalla Rookh. By daybreak we can be far up Georgia Straits and into Queen Charlotte Sound."

The day seemed interminably long, but finally it came to an end. Traversing the less frequented streets, Del and Gwen, baggage laden, arrived at the wharf. Quickly they climbed the rail to the yacht's deck.

Del descended to the engine room. He dared not strike a light, and it was slow work locating the switches and the oil feed and adjusting the carburetor. Nervously Gwen waited in the pilot house for a signal from Del to cast off.

Moncrief Morris, crouched in the shadow between the two wharf houses, had about decided to abandon his theory that Winnie would seek the Lalla Rookh to effect a change in clothing. He was on the point of leaving his hiding place when he heard cautious footsteps. Two figures crossed the

wharf and climbed the rail of the Lalla Rookh.

He had been right after all. Winnie had sought the yacht just as he had reasoned she would. Who her man companion was Morris could not imagine. He broke into a run. A policeman always patrolled the water front street.

Almost in the exact instant that Morris turned from the wharf and ran toward a helmeted figure that he saw standing upon the corner, a second pair of figures darted down the wharf from the distant end of the dock shed and also climbed the rail to the deck of the Lalla Rookh. The second pair comprised a giant of a man, and a girl garbed in a sort of masquerade outfit of jacket, pointed shoes and silken trousers.

The lines of the Lalla Rookh were cast off. Her engine began to hum. A policeman came running down the wharf, crying out to "Stop! Stop!"

The yacht went on, swiftly gathering speed. The policeman drew his revolver, fired in the air, and blew his whistle loudly.

A second officer came running. A horn honked, and a motorcycle policeman came tearing down the dock. The motorcycle man, when the two others had shouted something to him, turned his machine and tore back.

The police patrol boat, from its berth down the dock a distance, whistled hoarsely. Her engines began to roar. Out into the stream she went after the Lalla Rookh, now down the bay a considerable distance, an indistinct blur unmarked by lights.

CHAPTER XIX.

A STERN CHASE.

BIGPAW, while he continually urged Winnie to try and eat a few bites from the loaf of bread, ate nothing himself. Bigpaw was trying to think. Bigpaw had heard that in Canada ninety per cent of the persons charged with murder were arrested, tried and hanged, ninety per cent in Canada as against a three or four per cent in the United States.

They were hunting Winnie for the murder of Gundra Singh. If they caught her—

"Try and eat a bite, Win. You just got to stoke, or you hain't got no steam."

But Winnie couldn't eat. The horror through which she had passed had taken from her all appetite. Bigpaw eyed the masquerade outfit that she was wearing.

"Them hain't hardly the canvas to stand weather, Win," he said. "Soon as night comes again I just got to grab a boat somewhere, get you out of here, and get you some clothes."

Hardly conscious at first of what she was saying, Winnie repeated: "Clothes! A boat!"

Presently the thought began to take form.

"I know where clothes are, Bigpaw. You know how bitter we quarreled about clothes, Bigpaw. I know where clothes are—on the Lalla Rookh."

Bigpaw turned and faced her.

"That's right. And, say, Win, I can't see nothing wrong if we take and borry the loan of the boat, too, while we're at it. Nothing in these waters can overhaul her. Just what we'll do, Win. Good idea."

With dusk, traffic along the wharf began to lessen and finally ceased entirely, for their hiding place lay well toward the portion of the dock where freight boats only landed.

Bigpaw ventured to climb to the surface of the wharf for a look about.

"I've spotted her, Win," he exulted. "The Lalla Rookh hain't only about two hawse lengths down the wharf. We'll wait for it to get a little darker."

Down the wharf they crept, keeping to the shadows of the sheds to hide Winnie's betraying, outlandish garb from the eyes of the chance passer-by. Then, hand in hand, they ran swiftly across the dock, leaped the rail of the yacht.

Bigpaw, prepared to crush in the pilot house door with his weight, found the door open. Winnie, running to cast off the lines, found them cast off.

The yacht's engine began to hum. Winnie sprang for the house and laid her hand to the tiller spokes. From beside her came a voice: "Winnie!"

Gwen Barde! And Del below decks, in the engine room!

Pistol shots! A shrill whistle! Discovered! The patrol boat was in pursuit.

"Give her all she's got," Winnie shrielled down to the engine room. "They're after us!"

And Bigpaw, with the advantage of having operated the engine before, sped the Lalla Rookh up to the last notch on her timer.

The machine gun mounted forward on the police boat began to spill its lead.

Winnie twirled the tiller. The yacht darted away to starboard to give right of way to a number of lumbering fishing craft that were faring in.

Back to the course, Winnie turned the Lalla Rookh, bringing the fishing boats between the yacht and the patrol. The machine gun ceased its firing.

Now again they were in range, and the cherry-red of burning smokeless powder again lighted up the front of the patrol.

Mercilessly the police raked the stern and upper works of the fine yacht. But her hard wood and brass well withstood the bombardment. Not a bullet had entered the pilot house.

Bigpaw, who had been searching the owner's cabin, came up from below, an automatic rifle of foreign make in his grasp. Despite the protest of Winnie and Gwen, Bigpaw leaned from the pilot house, turned the weapon astern and emptied it at the pursuers.

"It's fairer to them chasing us," he argued, "to let 'em know we're cargoed for war."

Now the patrol boat, feeling the pitch and toss of the rougher outside water, was missing with its fire. Also, the Lalla Rookh, faster by several knots, was pulling rapidly away. When the police boat had the light of Thresher Rock abeam, the fugitive was two miles ahead.

When the light on Georgian Point angled thirty with the light on Patos, the patrol came about and headed back to Vancouver. The Lalla Rookh had crossed the line into American water.

A Vancouver morning paper carried a colorful story of the escape of the girl murderess and a male companion aboard a stolen yacht. The fugitives had answered the fire of the police patrol boat, the story

said, and Police Sergeant Sandy MacDowell had got his ear nicked.

At noon an extra appeared upon the streets. The American authorities had taken up the chase—had sent a revenue cutter to run down the stolen craft.

The identity of the stolen yacht had been determined. It was the *Lalla Rookh*. The registry showed that the *Lalla Rookh* was owned by one Howard James. The authorities had been unable to locate Mr. James. The second extra stated that the fugitive craft was still at large, but that the patrol boat, loaded with expert riflemen, had been dispatched to cruise back and forth to prevent the escape of the *Lalla Rookh* to the numerous small islands lying off Vancouver Island.

Moncrief Morris, reading the newspapers with much interest, repaired to the dock to interview a watchman who had said that he had seen a man and a woman run across the dock from the west end.

The watchman was very positive that the man and the woman had come running from the west end. Further, the watch declared that the man was of heroic stature and that the woman was dressed in trousers, a very foreign looking rig.

Strange. The man and woman whom Morris had seen run across the dock to the yacht had come from the east end, and the man of the couple decidedly was not of large stature and his female companion was not dressed in any oriental garb of trousers.

In this discrepancy between what the watchman claimed he had seen, and what Morris himself had witnessed, the Dong Lee found much material for reflection.

Upon his return up town, Morris bought a first edition of an afternoon paper. The Honorable William Barde had offered a reward of five thousand dollars for the capture of the murderer of Gundra Singh. The paper also stated that a forty-mile-an-hour racing boat had been dispatched from Victoria with a crew of four riflemen to assist in the patrol along the border.

Letting himself into the house of the Voy by the secret alley door, Morris began to question Mira Bai and Padnini about

Gwen Barde. Inquiry at Gwen's apartment house elicited the information that she had packed two bags and departed. The man and woman whom Morris had seen running across the dock to the yacht carried two bags.

Now to the keen mind of the Dong Lee the situation became simple. Aboard the *Lalla Rookh* were four fugitives, Gwen Barde, Del Dellinger, Winnie and Bigpaw Lacey.

From the Voy house, Morris went to the obscure hotel where he had quarters and changed his clothing. In the dress and presence of Dan Gavin he emerged from the hotel, took a southbound train to White-rock, and walked through the wood to his camp.

"Dancer," said Gavin, "if you had a twenty knot boat and got in among the islands, do you believe that you could make good your escape from a patrol boat and a revenue cutter and get away long before any speed boat could take up the chase?"

Mr. Dancer was of the opinion that he would effect escape, and began to enumerate the places where a man that "knowed" the island could be safe.

"Do you know of any one who knows the islands any better than Del Dellinger and Bigpaw Lacey?"

Dancer knew of no one who knew the islands better.

"That is what I think too, Bear Dancer. If they are caught, we ourselves are going to have to catch them. Get the power boat ready, Dancer. Fill her up with oil and gas. And say, Dancer, dig up an opium pipe, a layout, and a five tael tin of that good Pen Yen that we have stored away. They might come in handy. Hurry!"

CHAPTER XX.

DEANE MADE A FOOL OF.

BEHIND the locked door of an office in the parliament building at Victoria, William Barde and William Deane had been having a talk. Once or twice the conference had become almost a wrangle. Barde, it seemed to Deane, was being very unreasonable. Categorically, Barde had

disputed these following pertinent points. Barde doubted whether four chests of opium had been smuggled in. If they had been, the seals that had got them by the Shanghai officials must have been spurious.

Barde, obviously, did not like the idea of talking about the seals further, so Deane switched the conversation.

"Now there is no doubt but that the murder of Gundra Singh if followed back," said Deane, "will throw some light on this smuggling ring. I have been endeavoring to follow back and, as usual, I have been made a fool of. This time it is your Vancouver police."

Barde looked curious.

"Yes, the Vancouver police pulled a boner. About the neck of the murdered man was found a bit of fisherman's trawl line. Upon the floor, beneath the edge of the divan, the police found a second piece of trawl line. Both bits were cut from the same hank. I have proved that. But here is the boner. The police have both bits of trawl line, but they can't tell now which is the piece taken from about the neck of Singh and which the piece found upon the floor.

"Important? Well, rather! I have taken a prowl about the premises of the girl, Winnie Dellinger, who is accused of the murder. In a storehouse I found the original hank from which the bits of trawl line came. One piece had been cut from the hank by the slash of a knife. One piece had been taken from the hank by sawing it back and forth across a rusted nail. The rust shows on one end of one piece of cord, and the edge of the rusted nail is clean where the line sawed across it.

"Now which piece strangled Gundra Singh? Important!

"It is reported that a man aided this girl to get aboard the stolen yacht and is, presumably, with her now. A man probably would have a jackknife in his pocket. A girl just as probably would not. Do you see? One piece of cord was cut from the hank with a knife and one piece was sawed off on a rusted nail.

"Do you follow me? This Nautch girl, Mira Bai, claims that the girl Winnie killed Gundra Singh, strangled him to death be-

cause he was forcing her against her will to become his plural, heathen wife. May be. Let me whisper a secret. This girl, Winnie, was a sworn agent of the American government—is known to have declared her intention of breaking the smuggler crowd. Any light from that? I want you to club the Vancouver police into finding out who besides Winnie Dellinger might desire the death of Gundra Singh."

Barde drew the telephone toward him and called the chief of the Vancouver police.

"In the meantime," said Deane, rising, "I shall continue my search for the four chests. You need not worry about the province having to pay that hundred thousand dollar reward. I can't claim the reward myself, and those who might be able to locate the chests wouldn't do so for ten times the amount of the reward. Well, I will be going."

Had Mr. Deane been advised of the state of mind of William Barde, he assuredly would have understood the latter's disinclination to discuss the matter of the yellow seals. Privately, while in much distress of mind, Barde had sent a trusted employee of the parliament house, formerly of Scotland Yard, to Vancouver to check up a few items.

Gwen had said that she was studying under the tutelage of a learned Hindu swami. Akers, formerly of Scotland Yard, reported to Barde that there was no Swami in Vancouver, of the name given by Gwen. Gwen lived in a respectable apartment house, Akers reported, but was absent sometimes several days and nights at a time.

Further, Akers, his eyes directed through the window, reported that Gwen was known to frequent the Hindu quarters and that she had been seen more than once entering or leaving the identical place where Gundra Singh had been murdered.

"My God!" exclaimed Barde when Akers had left. "My God!"

Barde's hand trembled a trifle as again he took down the phone.

"Any word yet from the chase of the murder boat?" he asked.

"Yes," was the answer. "The skipper of a fast cruising launch that was sent to help keep the patrol along the line has just come in. He says—"

"Please send him up here, will you? At once."

Within a few moments, cap in hand, the worthy skipper of the cruiser stood in the presence of His Excellency, William Barde.

"We're a standing back and forth off Bell Chain Island, sir," said the skipper, "when here comes the bloody murder boat fair into the offing. Away we go after the bloody boat, the police patrol, my cruiser and two or three others.

"The boat is heading for Boat Pass between Samuel and Saturna Island. There's a girl at the wheel. I can see 'er plain through my glasses. A man comes into the pilot house while I'm looking. 'E points out through the house window with a 'and the size of a 'am, showing the girl to make for Boat Pass."

Barde interrupted to ask if at any time more than two people, a man and a woman, had been seen on the murder ship.

"No, sir, just them two, no more."

"My word, I says, when I see they was making for Boat Pass. Boat Pass is a very thin 'ole, sir, to make in the dark at top speed in a fast boat.

"But they made it, the Yankee fools. When we come up, there they were, anchored down in Winter Cove. That's very shallow, sir, and it being dark we didn't care to venture in, sir. Darned if the blooming fools didn't run up their riding lights like honest folks.

"We've got 'em now," said the police. "All we got to do is watch their riding lights and put out if they put out. In the morning, if they don't put out, we can watch the bottom and we'll take 'em."

"All night we stand by, sir, watching their riding light. Then, sir, in the morning, we're that surprised. They're gone, sir. Yes, they're gone. They'd let their-selves drift past on the ebb in the dark. The riding light was a lantern, sir, a 'anging on a tree."

The worthy skipper, by the express order of William Barde, reported to His Excel-

lency upon the day following, to this effect:

"It's on the last of daylight when we next pick 'em up, sir. The blinkin' murder boat comes poppin' out of a snug cove of Tumbo Island. The Yankees could have seen us if they looked. We were all there, my boat, the police, a couple more craft including the forty mile racer that your honor sent out from Victoria, sir. The bloomin' Yankees with 'alf an eye could have told that while they might run away from the rest of us, sir, they couldn't run away from the racer, and it with four rifle-men aboard, sir.

"Hanyway, it's near dark when they come out. They make straight for the hopen.

"Away goes the murder boat, sir, and away goes the racer after it.

"Don't shoot 'till we get alongside," says the chief of the four riflemen. "No use rakin' 'em from astern. Wait 'till we get abeam."

"Away they go, the speed boat making its thirty mile if it made a hinch, the murder boat runnin' what looked uncommon slow for it.

"The speed boat is overhauling the murder boat fast, sir. The speeder is only a hundred fathom astern of the murderer when I hear somethin' like the tunk of an axe, and a bloody crash, sir; and a terrible yelling that the water is cold, and hurry hup.

"We all puts in, sir, to where the yelling is goin on, and there's the riflemen clinging to their race boat. What you think? The bloody murder boat had been towing two sharpened sticks astern of 'em. They'd cut the sticks loose, and the speeder had spitted itself on the sticks, sir, like a bloody 'erring to be roasted.

"Oh, yes, sir, the ship got away."

"Were you able to make out the skipper?" asked Barde. "Whether there were more than two people aboard?"

"Too dark, sir, to see."

The third and concluding report rendered to Barde by the skipper was substantially as follows:

"Next, sir, we turns the murder ship

hout of Whaler Bay that's just abaft of Gossip Island. Hit's broad day, sir—two bells—five in the morning. We hain't expectin' 'em, sir, so they runs right through the nest of us before we know it.

"Hin the excitement, sir, getting under way, we rammed and fouled each hother a good bit, sir, and that gives the murder boat a fairish start. Now, too, we hain't got the speed boat to overhaul 'em with. The murder boat, Hi shame to say, can out-run any of us. But we can hang to 'er tail, sir, we think, and see where she heads.

"Side by side, my cruiser and the police are runnin' on. We're dropping a bit astern, sir, but hit's a stern chase, and we can keep 'em in sight for hours, for the Yankee fools have 'eaded north of heast, a course that will land 'em somewhere between Boundry Bluff and Vancouver.

"Away we hall go.

"'Hit's a bloody trick,' sings out the police skipper. 'They's no one on board. They've lashed the tiller.'

"Hi'm just on the point of agreeing, when, from the after pilot window of the murderer, bang!—bang!—bang! Three shots, slow and deliberate.

"Hi ducks into my own pilot 'ouse. The clock is striking three bells, half after five. Hon we go. Hit's seemed no time, sir, till they fetches away at us again, four shots—bang!—bang!—bang!—bang!

"'Clear for haction!' yells the police skipper. 'We'll stand it no more. We'll sink 'em.'

"They strip the machine gun, train it for fifteen 'undred yards, and turn 'er loose.

"The bay is smooth as glass, sir. I watch through the glasses, and the police did uncommon well. Soon I can see the police fire is wearing the murderer's stern very 'ard.

"Blime me, though, if the murderer don't reply to the police fire, three shots more—bang!—bang!—bang!

"But the police fire is eating 'er hout astern. Maybe a half mile off Boundry Bluff the murderer begins to roll and settle by the stern.

"Her prow begins to lift. She rolls some more. She stands on her tail, gives a dancin' twist like she's drunk—goes down.

"Soon we're over where she lies in eight

fathom of water. No sign of a body floating, nothing, sir, but a hat, a new hat, with the name 'Blodgett, Clothier, Vancouver,' hin the brim. And that's hall, sir."

"Thank you, skipper," said Barde.

When the skipper had closed the door after him, Barde gathered his head in his hands, and sat huddled over the desk as if he had grown old, very old.

CHAPTER XXI.

BIGPAW PERFORMS A LOT.

MR. WILLIAM DEANE, put in possession of the facts regarding the chase and sinking of the murder boat, did not share the opinion that the murderer and her companion had perished when the craft went down. It is possible that the Yankee instinct of him scented a ruse.

Nor was Deane at all satisfied with the progress made by the police in investigating further the facts surrounding the murder of Gundra Singh. It seemed to Deane that the authorities were permitting themselves to be deluded by the obvious, which Deane held to be mighty poor business in a police line of work.

Then Deane, after a further bit of investigation, began to think that the police might be right; that Gundra Singh had died as a result only of an unfortunate entanglement with a woman. He entered the Voy rooms, and called Mira Bai for a confidential word. Lowering his voice to a whisper, watching the Nautch girl narrowly, Deane broke the news abruptly: the white girl, Winnie, who had killed Gundra Singh, had been drowned.

There simply was no mistaking the exultation, the sudden fierce joy that lighted the dark eyes of Mira Bai. The Nautch girl drew a deep breath and folded her hands as if, suddenly, a great burden of distress had been lifted from her.

That circumstance pointed Deane to one conclusion. Then, presently, having tricked Mira Bai into further revelations, he quite as abruptly swung back to his former belief that there was more to the murder of Singh than any mere man-woman business.

"Whom did Gundra Singh have greatest cause to hate, Mira Bai?" asked Deane suddenly.

"The Dong Lee! Moncrief—"

Abruptly, Mira Bai paused. She realized that the white man had tricked her into saying something that she should not have said. Nor could Deane, by the exercise of any subterfuge, induce the Nautch girl to talk further.

Just the same, Mira Bai had said enough to confirm Deane in his belief that a disclosure of all the factors leading to the killing of Gundra Singh would put the authorities into possession of information sufficient to crush for all time the infamous organization called the Voy.

Then the thing called red tape threatened to clog the wheels. The Canadian authorities had accepted as a fact that the murderess and her companion had drowned, and had discontinued the search. The murder ship, as the Lalla Rookh had come to be known, had gone down inside the line, in American water. The Canadian authorities dared not lift a wreck that was in American water.

On the other hand, the American authorities had ceased to act. Save for a brief time after the Lalla Rookh had escaped from the police control, the murder craft had at no time been in American waters, but had remained on the Canada side in the vicinity of Tumbo and Saturna islands.

Deane hired a tug and put out for Boudry Bluff. Once more he went snooping about the cabin, the bunkhouse, and the shed. In the house he found a handleless teacup with some pennies in it, and upon a shelf in the clothes room a woman's hat made of very fine straw, but crushed and rumpled out of all resemblance to a hat. Nothing new.

Deane boarded the tug and put out to the approximate location, where the Lalla Rookh was alleged to have taken its final dive. Employing a joint of stove funnel for a "spy," Deane located the hulk where it rested, at that tide, in seven fathoms of water.

The tug came to anchor, fore and aft, and the skipper thereof assisted Deane into a diving suit, helped him over the side, and

stood by the air and signal lines. Deane was below a good half hour before he gave a yank to be hoisted. The first thing the skipper remarked when he lifted the metal and glass helmet from Deane's head was the broad grin upon the latter's face.

"Some slicker, the gent who accompanies the lady murderer. Some slicker. No bodies of the dead in that boat. Of course not. The shots. Simple as can be. The fellow simply fastened an English automatic rifle to the rear window sash of the pilot house with a clamp, ran a string from the trigger to the striker on the ship's clock. Get the idea? Three bells, three shots. Four bells, four shots. The last time, the thing would have fired five shots, but it had run out of ammunition and fired only three, all it had. Some slicker."

Upon his return to Vancouver, Deane found a code telegram awaiting him. Tagore Singh, highest prince of the Voy, had escaped from surveillance in Shanghai, and, it was suspected, had got away on a tramp steamer bound for America, very probably Vancouver.

The specific duty laid upon Deane in the cable was to remain right in Vancouver, spot Tagore Singh, and shadow him day and night. This completely knocked the private plans that Deane had laid for himself. But it was his business to obey, so Deane gave himself up to a lapse of many monotonous, eventless days.

Bigpaw Lacey had surprised the little fugitive company on board the Lalla Rookh. Underneath his grinning mask Bigpaw had brains, no end of nerve and resourcefulness.

From the first, Bigpaw had skippered the flight. The ruses whereby the Lalla Rookh had made escape, and the final masterpiece wherein the yacht had been sunk by the machine gun fore of the patrol, were Bigpaw's conceptions.

Four pairs of anxious eyes had watched from the dense shrubbery above Whaler's Bay as the Lalla Rookh sped away on its final voyage.

"I got an idea that now we'd better scatter," offered Bigpaw. "Some terrible smart geek may see through that scheme,

and they'll come r'aring after us again. One good thing, we're on a fine island for a hide-out—Galiano. It's narrow all the way, Galiano is, but she's fifteen mile long.

"My idea is, we should keep inland, through the center of the island where it is high and rocky, and make to the upper end. And we dassent leave no tracks, none whatever. When we get to the upper end we'll lay low, watch a chance, borrow a boat, or build a raft, ferry ourselves across to Valdes Island, and keep on traveling."

Provisions, clothing, charts, binoculars—all by Bigpaw's foresight had been removed from the Lalla Rookh. Now he proceeded to do these things into four packs, an immense one for himself, a smaller one for Del, and two smaller still for Gwen and Winnie.

When the packs were made up, Bigpaw drew a bottle from his pocket and required Del, Winnie, and Gwen to seat themselves upon a rock. Using the cork as a brush, he proceeded to paint the soles of the shoes of all, including his own sizable brogans.

"Turpentine," he explained. "Got it in the store hold where they'd had it to thin deck paint. Might use dogs to trail us, you see. You take and let a dog smell a track that's been turpented, and he's plumb disgusted, that dog is. He won't work none whatever."

Bigpaw tossed the empty bottle into the brush, and the four started toward the high, rocky interior. Gwen, nerveless, shaken from sudden termination of her poppy addiction, was in a pitiful state. Del carried her little pack with his own, helped her over the rough places, and constantly whispered cheer and encouragement to her.

By nightfall of the first day, so difficult had been the going, so careful had they been to leave no stone overturned, no fern or brake broken down, that they had made no more than a couple of miles.

The second day the fugitives made about four miles. Upon the evening of the third, from a high hill, they looked out upon Portier Pass, the opening of Georgia Strait to the right, Vancouver Island and the town of Ladysmith to the left.

Bigpaw slid down the hill to the right and looked about. Returning, he counselled in-

vestigating the cañon to the left for a camp site.

"There's a terrible snug, little cedar log cabin down there, deserted," he said, "but we'd better keep away from it. Where folks come once, they'll maybe come again."

Down the cañon to the left they plunged, and there, at no great distance from the water, they pitched their camp.

"My idea is we lay right here for a week or two," said Bigpaw. "Then we'll cross to Valdes, keep on, camp down again for a week or so. Then—"

Bigpaw's face grew sober. "I was a fool," he said, "that I didn't dig up some of Charlie Mohrman's money. I was a fool."

"Why?" asked Gwen.

"Why, we'd take and watch for a halibut boat coming in light. It coming in light will show they didn't have no luck, didn't catch no fish. They'll be disgusted and ready to sell their boat. Them being off the banks, they won't know nothing about us getting chased. We'd take and buy their boat, and we'd *klatawa*—hurry away—for Southeast Alaska."

"I have a little money, Bigpaw," said Gwen. "Every dollar in the world, after what we have been through together, belongs to all of us. I mean it. I have a little money. Here."

Gwen thrust a hand into the bosom of her dress and handed Bigpaw a tightly rolled bundle of bills of both Canadian and American currency.

Absently, Bigpaw began to count the money.

"A little money, eh? Five thousand dollars? Like to meet up with you, Gwen, when you got a regular bundle on you."

Gwen, because she wanted to be away from the others and hide the frightful agony of nerves that she was enduring, suggested that she alone stand watch, thus relieving the others to continue the work of building the camp.

Suspecting the wretched girl's motive, Bigpaw agreed. All day long Gwen remained upon the hilltop that was her Calvary.

Toward evening Del crept to the hilltop and spoke her name softly. In his arms,

Gwen sobbed and cried hysterically. She could stand it no longer, she said. She simply couldn't.

A few more days he assured her, and the victory would be hers.

"It's worth it, Gwen, a million times worth the agony. No, no, dear, you are going to be brave, and stick it out. I know you are."

"I will stick it out," she said. "I will."

Gwen drew Del's head to her and whispered: "I will stick it out. There is something that is stronger than the poppy devil, stronger than death, and that thing is love."

A power boat came to anchor in Whaler Bay, and a dinghy went ashore.

"From this bay, Bear Dancer," said Morris, "the poor old yacht started out on its last cruise. No one but a fool believes any one was aboard. Therefore, from this place our friends started their flight. Just take a little look up into the woods, Dancer, and see if you can find any trace."

Bear Dancer, who, to his other numerous abilities added that of a trailer of no mean

ability, returned after an hour spent in threshing the brush and climbing the rocks.

"We're barking at a knot, chief," he said. "Nobody ever made inland from this point, never. They hain't a stone turned, a branch broke over, nothing."

"Dancer," exclaimed Morris with his cold sarcasm, "I am ashamed that a trailer so gifted would be so easily fooled. They did start from this point. They are making toward the other end of the island, and they are traveling the rocks and down timber just so they will not leave any trail. Further, anticipating the possibility that they might be trailed by dogs, they have guarded against that. See here, Dancer. Do you recall ever having seen this before?"

Morris held up a small bottle.

"Yes, sure. That was in the hold, and had turpentine in it."

"Exactly. We shall find them on the upper end of this island, or, possibly, on the next island, Valdes. There is no hurry. We can get to the end of the island as soon as they. We've got them! They haven't a chance!"

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK



THE RETURN

DEAR one, how could I know away from you
 The stars would sink and leave the world so cold?
 How could I guess that in the tender morn
 The sun would seem less lavish of its gold?
 That the birds' song would cry of empty nest,
 That all the tasks of life would seem so vain?
 How could I dream the rain that flowers crave
 Would sob to me of loneliness and pain?

The ship that brought me to you throbbed its way
 Across the moonlit waste of waters deep;
 Impatient, I pulled up my anchored thoughts,
 And slipped myself upon the sea of sleep.
 So distance in oblivion lost itself,
 And I was home! The day held promise wide;
 How could I know, dear one, my world was *you*,
 And calm content was living by your side?

Edith Livingston Smith.



The Lexicon of Youth

By CARROLL JOHN DALY

MR. ROBINSON finished his dinner and returned to the gilt-edged and leather-bound volumes which were piled twelve high upon the library floor. He turned pages, read a bit here and there and made a wry face. Twice he muttered something under his breath and once he read a passage aloud to Mrs. Robinson, who stood regarding the whole performance with some trepidation. To all outward appearance the books were masterpieces of literature, but like those of the stage setting their beauty was skin-deep only. Mr. Robinson had paid eight-five hard-earned American dollars for this literary debauch and that he regretted the purchase was plainly written in every line of his countenance. That he also thought less of his wife's uncle could hardly be denied.

"I warned you not to buy them," Mrs. Robinson sought to establish her position before she was forced into an argument by the flow of eloquence which she knew would follow.

"You did." Mr. Robinson looked at her over volume seven. Whether this was a question, an exclamation or a simple state-

ment of the truth Mrs. Robinson did not know.

"Yes, I did," was the very best her utmost efforts could bring forth.

Chester Robinson, youthful member of the household, stood in the doorway regarding the whole procedure with great interest. He, too, had examined the books. But his inspection went no further than the beautiful covers and a few hasty glances at some gaudy pictures which did justice to the literature itself. However, they were the suggestion of his worthy uncle who could tell a funnier story, sing a funnier song and make a better cat than any one he knew. If his uncle had sold his father these books they were worthy of the most critical student.

"I have read passages from them—bits here and there from all of them." Mr. Robinson spoke slowly and distinctly as a man who expects to be quoted. "Drivel!" he went on. "All drivel—every word of the twelve volumes—drivel."

Chester waited to hear no more. It was enough that his father appreciated the books sold him by his favorite uncle. That

he did not fully understand what his father meant to convey would be putting it mildly. But one word appealed to the boy. That was *drivel*. It was new; had a pleasant ring. He would use it as occasion warranted. To him it meant all that was fine and noble. He turned it about on the tip of his tongue, tasted of it, fitted it snugly into different sentences. The more he dwelt upon it the more appetizing and pleasing it became.

In a hazy way he knew that his father and mother were still talking, but he did not listen. It was a beautiful summer night and more than one whistle came from across the lawn. His parents were in debate. There was no one to tell him what time to return. Here was a golden opportunity to slip out into the night—and Chester slipped.

Five minutes later found him in the Collins barn, where a special meeting of the Secret Three was to be held.

"Now, then—we got some business to do," Eddie Collins announced when the lamp was lighted and the door tightly shut. "First off we want to know if you have spoken to the new girl yet, Ches?"

"No, I ain't. I been wonderin' if she was goin' ta live in the town for good."

"I think she is, though I don't know nothin' about it." Jimmy Walsh, the third member of the society, offered this information.

"It 'll be tough on Ches if she don't." Eddie shook his head.

"Why me?"

"'Cause you lost your girl, Margie Blakely. Don't you think I see the way she treated you to-day?"

"Oh, her! She's just jealous." Chester spoke lightly, proud and confident in his new-found love.

"Margie's open, then." Eddie rubbed his chin speculatively.

"Well, I don't know." Chester was thoughtful.

"You look here, Chester Robinson. You just can't have all the girls in town. Why, you wanta be a regular Bluebeard."

"That's right," Jimmy Walsh cut in. "We've sworn to stick together in all things and never fight unless we fight some one besides us. Now, then, Ches, just 'cause you

drew the lucky number what lets you have first chance to ask Vivian St. James to be your girl don't say that you own first rights on every other girl."

"Yep." Eddie nodded. "The agreement only said you had first chance. After she turns you down it's my turn, and then Jimmy's, and if she don't like none of us, why, she can't have no one else—we've sworn to that."

"But didn't I tell ya I don't know the woman?" Chester raised his voice. "How's a feller goin' up to a girl what he don't know and ask her to be his girl? I tell ya it ain't done."

"Why ain't it?" Eddie's voice was scornful.

"But I don't wanta lose my chances with her. A feller's got to use a little *drivel* with women." Somehow the word came to Chester—just an inspiration.

Both his opponents paused in the beginning of heated sentences.

"What's that?" Jimmy wanted to know.

"Oh—just a wisdom—a great wisdom," Chester explained easily.

"What kind a *drivel* was you thinkin' of usin'?" Eddie did his best to speak naturally.

Chester was embarrassed; then came another happy thought.

"I tell you what, fellers." He jumped suddenly to his feet. "I'll do it to-morrow if Eddie 'll introduce me."

"Introduce ya! Me! Me what wants her!" Eddie choked.

"Go on, do it for him. What difference does it make?" Jimmy was willing; he might need such help himself. He wasn't particularly impressed with Vivian's beauty and citified airs. Nor had he admired like the others her presentation of "Paul Revere" at the church sociable the night before. Chester was his ideal and in his humble way he would have been well content to play second fiddle. But Chester, in his pride and perhaps fear of Eddie's personal attraction, had suggested a way for three men to love the same woman and still be friends.

As for Eddie, to be sure he respected Chester's judgment, but then he had an eye of his own for feminine charm. But great

minds run in the same channel. Vivian was from the big city; her carriage, her clothes, her little ways were different. She did not run and play like Margie Blakely, the belle and champion recitationist of the village. And Margie was feeling the influence of this vamp and for the first time in her life spent long periods before her mirror viewing with alarm the vanishing youthful charms that were hers.

"Eddie's afraid she'd take me." Chester was not anxious to hurry matters.

"Ain't, neither. What for, I'd like to know? But no one introduced me. I just walked up and asked her her name and where she come from—and the regular sort of stuff."

"Yep—you don't know no better."

But the shot did not go home. Eddie was thinking. Margie was not so bad and he felt that with Chester out of the way there might be opportunity in that direction. Besides, he would have to take some girl to the coming Fourth of July picnic; and Eddie looked ahead. If Chester got Vivian then there would be Margie—that is, if Chester hurried things so that he might know where he stood. Others would be ahead of him unless— Eddie wrinkled his brows, deciding to hustle things along.

"A'right, Ches," he said. "I'll do it tomorrow. But don't blame me if she don't like ya. Vivian's very particular."

Chester coughed and straightened his tie, but the modest Jimmy Walsh sighed. What chance had he if Vivian was particular?

II.

MARGIE BLAKELY stood aghast as she watched the boys in their efforts to please Vivian St. James. They fought, wrestled and knocked one another down. All but Chester! He had made a study of Vivian and tried to copy her dignity, though he was not above dexterously tripping a boy who came within the radius of his nimble legs. But aside from this slight display of masculine ability he took no part in the general activities. He was above the common herd. Vivian watched him, and even her gentle dignity was pierced. Once when he sent a small boy down harder and caused him to

roll farther than usual the modest Vivian openly smiled her appreciation. But Margie could hold her temper no longer; she had a loving heart and, besides, this genteel display was not for her.

"What a horrible, mean thing to do!" Margie approached Vivian and Chester and addressed her words straight between the boy and the girl toward the hedge beyond them.

"There, there." Chester spoke in sarcastic gentleness. "Little girls shouldn't be about here. Run home and play with your dolls." He turned to Vivian. "She will follow me about," he explained.

Vivian laughed aloud—a laugh which should have brought joy to Chester's heart. But it did not; the old shackles were not broken as easily as he thought. He pitied Margie; pitied her his loss.

Stunned, Margie turned and walked away. A hundred cutting retorts entered her head, but they came too late and were lost too quickly for future use. Chester realized that in so slighting Margie he had cut his last remaining link in that quarter; but he was laying his plans for the avowed love of Vivian.

"I don't care much to play those kind of games." He indicated with a jerk of his thumb the wrestling figures.

"Too rough?" Vivian was watching the departing Margie.

"Too rough!" Chester echoed indignant. "I should say not—that's the trouble. I'm afraid of hurtin' some one. I'm terrible strong."

"I like strong men." Vivian always encouraged acceptable males.

"Sometimes my strength frightens me," Chester went on modestly. "Most everybody does what I want them to." He laughed, and then seeing the opportunity to put the question, the answer to which his friends were anxiously awaiting, he jumped suddenly at it. "Look at Eddie Collins and Jimmy Walsh over there—why, they can't ask ya somethin' till after me."

But she did not accept the bait; she, too, had a point to make.

"Will they do whatever you ask them?"

"Every time." The boy nodded confidently.

"That's nice," she said thoughtfully. "Do they like me?"

This was an embarrassing question. If he said no he hurt her pride; if he said yes he hurt his chances. But he got out of his difficulty with a master stroke that many an older person might have envied.

"No one could help liking you, Vivian," he said simply.

"Oh!" was all she said.

"Nope—no one could help it." He tried again; things were getting a bit slow.

"Did you like my recitation, 'Paul Revere,' the other night?"

Chester gasped at the easy freedom with which she changed the subject.

"It was great." There could be no other answer.

"Are you an elocutionist?"

"I've done some." He didn't hesitate, but he knew that he was treading dangerous ground. The word had a familiar ring, but he could not exactly place it. Reason told him that it was music, but instinct warned him to go slowly; she changed subjects so fast that it might mean any one of a hundred different things.

"Did you like mine better than Margie Blakely's?" She looked him straight in the eye.

"Every time." He returned the look steadily. "I like your dark hair better too." This was a safe subject; Margie was very proud of her golden locks.

"You know there is going to be a contest in elocution at Thornton Hall next week." She had the conversation where she wanted it now.

"You'll win it easy." Chester breathed a sigh of relief; he knew his ground now. This contest had taken place at the close of the school year as long as he could remember. And it had always been Margie's night; never had she failed to take the gold medal since she first took part. To walk home with her that night! To be the feller of a champion! If he regretted anything in the loss of Margie it was this great occasion. Now, he felt that he might have both. Here was a new incentive to win Vivian.

"—but that's what worries me." Chester suddenly realized that Vivian was speak-

ing. "You see they don't have any grown-up judges here like they do in the city. I always win there. But the children decide here and they don't know me very well. You see—not knowing me—they might give the prize to some one else—some one what ain't so good."

"I see—" Chester was thinking. "You'd like me to get the gang to vote for you. That's it. Isn't it?" He looked at her shrewdly.

"I only want them to do what's right." Vivian attempted an expression of great innocence and honesty of purpose.

"Sure—but you want that medal."

"I want it if I earn it." She let her eyelashes droop prettily.

"Yer—but above everything else—you want it." Chester made no attempt to put the statement delicately.

"I simply want what's right." She swung back and forth.

They understood each other.

"Well then listen here." Chester got down to business. "Suppose I get you to win that medal. I ain't tryin' ta scare ya but ya ain't got no chance without my help. Margie'll put it all over you. I heard you the other night." There was no diplomacy here. The situation was too big and he wished her to understand the magnitude of her request.

"I'm better than what she is." Vivian's eyes flashed dangerously.

"Yer, a'right—but the bunch know her and'll vote for her. But I'll fix that."

"Oh, Ches; you will?" She placed a hand on his shoulder. A thrill of pleasure should have shot through his manly bosom, but it did not. Still there was a feeling of pride, a feeling that other eyes would see his conquest. But he did not let his heart get the better of his head.

"I will under a condition," he said.

"Oh, Chester."

"I tell ya what, Vivian. I'll do this thing for you if you'll be my girl."

"Yes, Ches, I will." The condition was easy.

If she had hesitated even the fraction of a second his pride might have overcome his reason. But she accepted too willingly—he was not suspicious—only careful.

"You'll have ta put it in writin' and promise to go on the picnic with me. There ain't no other way," he added as a scowl passed over her face.

"If you promise to keep it secret I'll do it," she agreed.

"Two fellers has got to know." Chester thought of his friends.

"But I want to be your girl, Ches. I always wanted to be but—" She paused and looked cautiously around. "I was afraid."

"Afraid of Margie?"

"I should say not. What do I care for her? I was afraid for you."

"For me—why?"

"I was afraid some one—some one might kill you."

"Who? Me?" For a moment Chester was startled, for to Vivian's credit it must be admitted that she put her simple statement most dramatically.

"Yes," she whispered. "Them that have sworn to kill any one what is my feller."

"Them? Is there more than one?"

"Hundreds." Vivian's voice was almost inaudible.

"Gee!" Chester did not for a moment believe Vivian, but he would not admit this even to himself. Unconsciously he entered into the spirit of the thing. "I ain't afraid of them—not one of them—not all of them." His attitude was noble—magnanimous. "Give me the names of them, Vivian—every one of them. It may take years, but I'll get them all—these men what are ruinin' ya life."

But this was a display of heroism which did not meet with Vivian's approval. She had hoped for fear—expected fear and now Chester had raised himself, in his own estimation at least.

"All right, I'll write it." She felt that further delay now might make him more exacting. "But don't show it around till after I get the medal anyway. It might hurt me with the boys—they'll all be mighty envious of you." There was no conceit in her voice—it was as though she simply stated a great universal truth.

"Good!" Chester produced pencil and paper and fell to work. "I like you best of any girl now."

"I like you best too, Ches. Where do I sign?" It gave her a little thrill to read the paper and there was a certain daring about the whole thing which held its attractions.

"On the dotted line," he answered. "That's what it's there for. It's on all real papers."

"A'right." She signed the paper, neglecting to return the pencil which the boy had given her.

"Thanks—and let's have the pencil." This great and new love had not dimmed his eyes to the things of life. "Well, I'll see you again Vivian." He pocketed the paper and the pencil and turned away. His friends must know of his success.

"You won't forget about the medal." She placed a detaining hand on his arm.

"What med—Oh, yes, I won't forget. So long, Vivian."

Vivian St. James bit her lip. For the first time in her many affairs of the heart she was not quite sure of herself nor of her new admirer.

III.

It was with some difficulty that Chester convinced his friends that they must stick to him in the progress of his love affair. Eddie agreed at once, but this was anything but encouraging, for Eddie's principles were loose and uncertain. As for Jimmy Walsh he flatly refused to be a party to any such scheme as Chester suggested with regard to voting for the medal. Jimmy held peculiar ideas of honor and to the disgust of both Chester and Eddie insisted upon voting for the girl who did the best.

So Vivian was brought into it and lured the hitherto honorable Jimmy into evil ways. After two days of Vivian's society he even suggested voting twice in the hope that it might be overlooked.

And Vivian had at last fallen a victim to love. Her little heart beat with real emotion as Jimmy gazed with undisguised admiration on her beauty. His timid manner and humbly adoring ways won her heart and she planned dark schemes to rid herself of Chester and his odious agreement—after she received the gold medal. Sometimes she doubted if she needed the help of

Chester so much. Still Margie was not without her following. The envious and love-sick stood between her and the coveted medal. That Vivian could hold the envious was assured, but that she could hold the love-sick was very much doubted. Secretly she had plighted her troth to at least half a dozen swains and had accepted five separate and distinct invitations to go to the picnic. And come what might she had decided to go with Jimmy Walsh. So with the practiced hand of a lady of many affairs Vivian St. James kept the ball rolling.

Chester worked hard, and yet he was not satisfied. Not that he suspected Vivian. Under ordinary circumstances he would have discovered her duplicity-plus, but this was no ordinary affair. Never was he so taxed before. Margie's friends were stanch. All the thirty-four members of the Young Debating and Recitation Society of Newton knew that the winner of the gold medal was a question of politics alone.

The very best information Chester could obtain by a careful canvass was that Vivian would win by the slender majority of two. On Eddie's vote the whole thing hung. Eighteen for Vivian, fourteen for Margie, and two honest! There was no doubt in his mind that the honest ones would vote for Margie. If Eddie quit him—

A few days before the contest he put it up to Vivian.

"You'll have to pretend to be very nice to Eddie," he gulped. "A lot depends on Eddie—more than you think. But you mustn't let him know anything about it."

"But I do like Eddie," Vivian pouted.

"I said *pretend*. You can't like him and me too."

"But I—I love you, Ches." Vivian looked up at him with great dovelike eyes.

"A' right." Chester gulped again. She was very beautiful. "But don't forget that you're only to pretend. Remember I'm lettin' ya do this for yourself—not for me." He turned away and started down the street; suddenly he swung about. "And remember, be mighty careful. Eddie's a bad man to fool with. Much worse than that hundred—that hundred what you was tellin' me about."

With this final warning he turned again

and, hurriedly crossing the street, was lost to view around the corner.

Of a certainty, this was the hardest task of Chester's adventurous and rather checkered career.

IV.

At last came the night—the great night which Chester longed for, yet feared. For once he did not go carefully over his well laid plans with a confident and easy air; for once he counted on luck and avoided going under ladders and walking on cracks. He had hunted diligently for a horseshoe, and more than once cursed inwardly the innovation of the automobile. He was broke—stony broke. In an attempt to gain votes all his cherished possessions were given away. All but one, a little gold knife which Margie had given him the Christmas before last. Had sentiment made him keep it, or did it have the sharpest blade found in the city of Newton? However, he had kept it, knowing full well that Eddie Collins coveted it with a longing that was intense. On several different occasions he had painstakingly shown Chester how easily the name Chester on the handle could be changed to Eddie. And Chester had as diligently showed him the impossibility of such a feat. Then Eddie had come right out and offered him a nickel; the very nickel which Chester had given him to buy candy with. But Chester had ignored the insult and the hidden threat about the voting, and retained the knife.

What a night! The hall was crowded; relatives who looked on with admiring eyes; friends who sat bored and endeavored to look interested. But the Young Debating and Recitation Society of Newton was in its prime. The preliminaries were over; Margie Blakely and Vivian St. James were to compete for the gold medal.

Chester Robinson had no special seat, but wandered nervously about the hall. Once in a jam he met Eddie and tried his last bit of subterfuge.

"Get Vivian that medal, Eddie, and I have somethin' in my pocket for you—somethin' ya want—you know what." And he touched his pocket where usually reposed the gold knife. He gave Eddie no

chance to question him, but hurried away. That the pocket now held a tin whistle gave Chester's conscience little concern.

After several futile attempts to reach Chester, in which he stepped on many toes and once got his ears boxed, Eddie gave it up and wandered aimlessly about the narrow corridors of the old hall.

There was a debate first: "Should the Great American Government Form Alliances with Any Other Government?" But Chester was not interested; he had made alliances of his own which occupied his whole attention. Then came the test—the event.

H. Horace Spooner, owner of the only department store in town, which also had an entire room devoted to books, was responsible for the Debating and Recitation Society. He also presented the gold medal. It was his show, and he was entitled to speak, and the gold medal was small enough recompense. His English was nearly perfect, but his voice was not clear and the acoustics indifferent to his efforts.

Margie, as the champion, was entitled to speak first. She came forth in a brand new dress and announced a brand new speech, "An Arab's Farewell to His Steed." This announcement met with an outburst of applause. Margie did well. She only got stuck twice, and then for very short intervals. With a pretty bow she retired. The handclapping was deafening.

Then came Vivian, and in a voice which defied the acoustics to do their worst, announced, "The Charge of the Light Brigade." This also received a great ovation. So far the contestants were even. And then Vivian went to work in earnest. She ran that brigade up to the ditch and hurled them in with the speed of the fastest racing car. She fairly shook the rafters and never once stopped for breath nor at a loss for a word.

She knew her piece, and knew that she knew it, and dared the audience to catch her tripping or even hesitating for a moment. That no one could understand a word except "death" and "valley" was of small importance. "The Light Brigade" was a well known selection; people should know it. If they did not, it was time they went

home and studied it. Besides, for those who still persisted in their ignorance there was a pretty little bow at the end which told them it was over.

Vivian ran against time, and won in a gallop. She finished in a burst of speed and a shout that woke up two old gentlemen, thus adding two extra pairs of hands to her applause. The piece was terrible, but the handclapping was about the same, so again the honors were even.

Mr. Spooner then arose, and after a few complimentary remarks called upon the thirty-four members of the society to cast their ballots in the little box at the back of the hall. The rule here was that each member was to hand in two separate slips of paper in a sealed envelope. On one slip was to be written in less than ten words, "Who was the best, and why." On the other, "Who was the worst, and why." This was Mr. Spooner's arrangement. It was for educational purposes. How or why was never explained. It was enough that he read each slip aloud to the audience.

Chester was the last to drop his envelope in the box, for two reasons. He knew full well that Margie was by far the best, and that if his friends were faithful he had robbed her of her rightful honor. And there by the little box stood Eddie Collins, and his gaze was bent intently upon Chester. In every line of his face was grim determination as he tried vainly to attract Chester's attention. Chester knew that, given the chance, he would make a demand for that knife—this would be the price of his vote. So he hung back as long as he could, and when he saw that, through the insistence of Mr. Spooner's manager, Eddie was obliged to drop his envelope in the box, he boldly advanced and, ignoring the wild gestures of Eddie, slipped his vote in after it.

"Well—what do you want?" Chester turned furiously about as his chum grabbed him by the arm.

Nothing mattered now—the whole thing was over. Come what might, the vote could not be changed. Previously he had not wished to talk to Eddie, but now he was willing—even eager.

Eddie had a long story, but one look at

his friend's flushed countenance and he changed his mind. He made it short and snappy. Yet the effect could not have been better had he dragged it out half the night.

"I just seen Jimmy Walsh kissin' Vivian or—I mean, I just seen Vivian kissin' Jimmy. Ches, she's been lyin' to all of us."

"She did! He did! Where is he?" Chester could hardly speak.

"I seen them out there." Eddie pointed to the little hallway off the cloak room. "It wasn't Jimmy's fault. I seen it all."

"I'll fix 'em." Things went black. He saw in his former friend Jimmy all that hundred bent on murder Vivian had told him about. Making a wild dash toward the little curtains which parted suddenly as he reached them—he confronted Vivian.

"You—you!" He stood gasping for breath.

"Yes, me. What do you want?" She threw up her head—the vote was cast. She no longer feared Chester and she was tired of his caveman actions.

"I know all what you've been doin'," he accused her. "I know all about you and Jimmy Walsh. Don't stand there shakin' and cryin'. It won't help you none with me."

This speech was very pleasing to Eddie, but look as he would he could find no sign of tears nor abject terror on Vivian's part.

"Don't be a silly boy." Vivian laughed. "There"—she turned to Eddie—"take him away. He's an awful nuisance."

"Take him away yourself. Who do ya think you're orderin' about?" Eddie refused to be drawn into the row.

"A nuisance—me? You who are goin' on the picnic with me." This was not what Chester wished to say—it just slipped out.

"Why, I wouldn't go on no picnic with you. I'm goin' with Jimmy." She smiled sweetly.

"Oh, you are you—are you? What about the paper you signed?" Chester hissed the words through his teeth.

"Oh, tra, la, I don't care about your old paper. I signed it with my left hand, anyway." She snapped her fingers in his face.

"Listen!" Eddie called suddenly. "They're readin' the votes now."

All three turned toward the stage, and walking to the back of the hall, leaned their chins upon the railing as the voice of Mr. Spooner reached them.

"The score now stands sixteen to sixteen. Never before has the contest been so close. There are but two more papers. I must be very careful." With mechanical precision Mr. Spooner placed his hand in the box and brought slowly to light an envelope.

"Eddie Collins," he said quietly; then breaking the seal he read both the papers to himself. He scowled a bit and tearing them into tiny fragments, threw them at his feet.

"Eddie Collins is disqualified for using language unbecoming a gentleman." Mr. Spooner spoke with some dignity, addressing his words directly at the center of the third row. Mr. and Mrs. Collins turned a deep red.

"I said that Vivian was punk—awful, rotten, punk!" Eddie answered Chester's inquiring look.

"Good ole Eddie." Chester laid a hand on the faithful friend who had betrayed him. The next instant Eddie received a resounding slap in the face. Turning quickly he saw Vivian speeding down the side aisle to her seat by her aunt.

"The last and deciding vote is from Chester Robinson." And as Mr. Spooner spoke the words Chester groaned aloud. And as the fates directed, his eyes gazed into Margie's far down in the center of the house. But Mr. Spooner was reading, and Chester wished that the floor might open up and swallow him.

"The first vote is—Vivian St. James and reads—" Mr. Spooner paused, then added: "All drivell. Every word of Vivian's was drivell." The second—Margie Blakely: "Not a word of drivell in the whole speech."

"Vivian wins," sighed Chester.

"Miss Margie Blakely again wins the gold medal," answered Mr. Spooner.

Chester was stunned—stupefied. How could Mr. Spooner have made such a mistake? But he had, or Chester had heard the count wrong, for there was Margie advancing to the platform and receiving the medal. And it seemed that her smile was directed toward him.

His head was in a whirl; in a dazed fashion he listened to Eddie's talk and realized that a great number of people were leaving the hall. Slipping in between a fat lady and gentleman he dodged the persistent questions of Eddie and, hidden in the crowd, made his way into the lobby. Stepping to one side he looked into the window of a photographer's shop, lost in thought.

A hand was placed suddenly upon his shoulder. Swinging about he faced Margie. She was about to upbraid him for his terrible actions and he hung his head. The mistake must have been discovered. And all at once it came to him. How could he ever have compared the horrible Vivian with the sweet young face that now peered into his? He knew now that there was only one girl—Margie—and he had lost her forever.

"Ches," Margie said softly, "ain't you goin' to walk home with me—like you always did?"

He looked up and saw that a tear lingered on her lashes. "Oh, Margie—would ya—would ya be seen with me?" he gasped.

"Why—why, I'd be proud—if you can ever forgive me."

"Forgive you, Margie—me—what for?" Chester gasped in surprise as she slipped a little arm into his and led him up the street.

"Oh, the thoughts I had about you, Ches; the very awfulest thoughts. I might have known that good ole Ches could never be—what I thought." She began to cry.

"Don't do that, Margie." He patted her hand.

"Oh, Ches, it was just noble of you. And all the time you were really doing those horrible things for me." She wiped her eyes and laughed a little. "What a terrible thing you wrote about Vivian! How did you come to do it?"

"Oh—I don't know." He was beginning to recover from his shock, and after all, Margie had won the medal.

"It was just wonderful of you—but how you did fool me!"

"Oh—I guess I always fool people."

"And you're my feller again—Ches?" She looked up at him timidly.

"Can I be—Margie?" In his eagerness he forgot to be wary.

"Of course you can—I'll be so happy. That is, if you forgive me. But what could I think?"

"O' course I forgive you. I don't blame ya for—for thinkin'."

They had reached Margie's house now.

"Good night, Ches—and you're just—wonderful," she said at parting.

"Good night, Margie—and the same to you." Chester stood a moment and watched her run up the path. "Oh, Margie," he called, "will ya go to the picnic with me on the Fourth?"

"I'd love to, Ches."

"A' right—then that's fixed." He heard the front door slam; turning, and whistling merrily, he ran across the street in time to enter his house on the heels of his parents.

Half an hour later Mr. Robinson called down the stairs:

"Come—come, Chester! Hurry up and get to bed. What are you doing?"

"Just lookin' up somethin' in the dictionary," Chester answered, and then half aloud and half to himself: "Dr-dri-driv-drivel. Ah! There it is. 'Drivel—to let saliva drip from the mouth—talk or act like a fool.'" With a surprised and satisfied chuckle he closed the book and regarded himself in the long mirror. For several minutes he continued this performance with considerable relish. Then, straightening his tie he smiled.

"Not so bad," he muttered, and directing his finger at his noble reflection, added: "Chester Robinson, you're a bad man to fool with and—and there's them what know it to-night."



THE MAN FROM LAZY RIVER

BY CHRISTOPHER B. BOOTH

our Complete Novelette in next week's issue, is told as a Western tale should be told—in vivid action—by a man who knows his subject.



Garland the Great

By WYNDHAM MARTYN

Author of "Anthony Trent, Master Criminal," "The Bathurst Complex," etc.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LIFTING OF SHADOWS.

ROBERT HAMMOND was waiting for Anthony Trent's return with an anxiety which far outshadowed any emotion he had ever before experienced. He rose to his feet as Trent entered. He was to hear his doom pronounced or his supremest hopes realized. Although he composed his face he could not keep the tremor from his voice.

"Well?" he said, "what is it?"

Trent put his hands on the younger man's shoulders and looked into his face.

"How much do you love her?" he demanded.

"You know," Hammond said reproachfully.

"Do you love her well enough to stick by her if she is in trouble and even disgrace, and your family interferes?"

There was not a moment's hesitation in the answer.

"I will cut myself adrift from everyone I ever knew if necessary."

"I don't think it will be necessary. You shall judge for yourself."

When the recital of Lora's woes had ended, Hammond was cheerful again.

"Poor child," he cried, "how it must have worried her!" Suddenly the possibility of the American courts of law and the warrant came home to him. "Will it be very serious?"

"I'm afraid so. She's got to go through with it if it's true."

Hammond looked at his friend anxiously. "You think it is?"

"It's such a usual sort of accident," Trent told him. "Our East side swarms with children who run to and fro never heeding automobiles. She lost her nerve and will have to pay for it."

"How soon can I go and see her?" Hammond asked.

"That cable ought to be here in three days."

This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for May 19.

"Don't make me wait as long as that," Hammond begged. "Don't you see I simply must see her and tell her it makes no difference to me. I'll be very careful."

"Will you? She tells me you threatened to go and see Garland. If you had, that would have given the whole show away. That wasn't quite cricket, was it?"

Hammond flushed. "I was mad," he admitted. "I thought she hated me and I couldn't bear to let her imagine I was a criminal."

"I don't think I'd make any arrangements to see her for another day or two. I'll cross to New York with you if you want me. I have an ace or two up my sleeve." He did not tell Hammond that he had rendered a great service to his country once and had been thanked by his ambassador.

When the answer to Trent's cable had not come on the third day, Hammond won a rather grudging consent from his friend to his visit to Hampton Wick.

"I suppose there's really no reason why you shouldn't go," Trent said, "as Garland remains hidden. Don't let her feel badly that the cable hasn't come yet."

Hammond wanted, desperately, to see Lora again. It was about eleven o'clock when he accidentally met her and Charles Garland face to face. Hammond would have passed them by without seeming recognition had not he felt certain from Garland's look that he was known. He saw, too, that Garland had not failed to observe her dismay. "Ah," said Garland with a genial air. "Our young and distinguished friend, Captain Robert Hammond, if I make no mistake, whom we thought to be regaining his health in Hampshire. Is it permitted to ask what brings him to this ancient borough?"

Hammond recovered his presence of mind and shook hands with Lora Craig. He did not immediately answer Garland's question.

"How delightful to see you again," he observed to the girl. "And this, I take it," and he could not keep a touch of insolence out of his voice, "is you amiable uncle?" He bowed slightly. "I have come down

to take luncheon with my aunt who has a suite of rooms at the Palace."

"A convenient aunt at the Palace!" Garland sneered. "Have you thought of her name yet?"

"Lady Hellesdon, sir," Hammond answered stiffly.

"I remember her husband. He commanded the cavalry in the Soudan war. The family motto is a very curious one from Cicero chosen by the first viscount under the impression that it was a pious tag reflecting on his prowess: '*Qui semel scurra, nunquam paterfamilias.*' I commend it to your attention and, lest you forsook your classics when you entered Sandhurst, let me remind you that it means, 'he who has been a buffoon will never make the father of a family.'" He turned to Lora. "My niece is so overjoyed that she is speechless."

"I was thinking how abominably rude you are," she said with spirit.

"Let me make amends by asking Captain Hammond to dine with us some day this week. I can promise him a sound claret although it is difficult for those who smoke cigarettes between courses to realize its delicious bouquet. Let me see, you were born somewhere about 1893?"

"The very year," Hammond answered.

"Then you shall have wine laid down in that great claret year, the veritable *Haut Brion* which our friend Pepys called 'Ho Bryen.'" He turned again to his niece with an appearance of ceremony. "Do not let me forget this. Shall we say Friday? Good. Come my dear girl, we are robbing the viscountess of a loved nephew's society."

As soon as he could, Hammond telephoned to his hotel and tried to get Trent. He learned that his friend was out. Motor-ing back to town he met another disappointment to read a note from Trent saying he had gone out with some American acquaintances to golf and would not be back until after dinner. Wadham was not to be found. He had made a sudden visit and left no address.

Trent did not return until the following afternoon. He had spent the night at Brighton. He saw at once that Hammond was disturbed.

"What's happened?" he cried.

"The worst," Hammond replied. "I ran slap into Garland and Lora. I tried to find you everywhere, but had no luck at all."

"Tell me exactly what happened," Trent commanded.

When it was over Hammond thought he had never seen his friend so depressed.

"I suppose you realize," said Anthony Trent, "that this means we have seen the last of Uncle Charles Garland?"

"I don't know about that," Hammond returned, "he didn't seem a bit upset at meeting me and actually had the cheek to ask me to dinner on Friday."

"It seems," said Trent, "that you never will comprehend that man as I do. I tell you this. Not five minutes after you left him he was at home arranging to make his escape with all his precious loot. Sometime last night while I was playing poker, at which I won everything," he emptied his pockets of notes and cheques, "he was sailing down the Thames on his way to safety. It wasn't any haphazard move. The things Wadham hankers after may even now be secreted in some house selected long ago."

Vaguely, Hammond felt it was all his fault. Certainly he had never before seen Trent's impressive certainty desert him. The thought of Lora's fate terrified him.

"What do you suppose has happened to her?" he demanded.

"That's what we must find out. Probably she is as much mystified about his disappearance as we. If he knows definitely we are hot on his trail he dare not take her with him. He has scored again! 'Phone to Wadham and say we'll pick him up in half an hour on our way to Wood-lawn."

"This will leave Lora free!" Hammond exclaimed.

"I hope so."

"Why shouldn't it leave her free?"

Trent's manner had something of impatience in it.

"My dear Bob, we are dealing with an abnormal being, probably the most dangerous man in London, who will stop at nothing when his own safety is concerned."

Trent pondered on Lora Craig's fate. If by any chance she had been unlucky enough to try to stop Garland, or to threaten to denounce him, nothing could save her. Blood was already on his hands and he was now at the most desperate moment of his career.

And if Garland had got away safely, in what fastness might he not be hiding? He probably knew vast London as well as Trent knew his own New York.

"This is dreadful news," cried Wadham, as he climbed into the limousine.

"Isn't it!" Trent said. But Hammond noticed he was not dejected.

"That feels like a weapon in your pocket," Wadham went on after he had taken his seat between the two.

"It is," Trent told him. "It would be just the dramatic thing your Niccolo might like to do, to come back and hold us up as we are sampling his *Haut Brion*."

"He wouldn't risk that!" Hammond declared.

"Probably not, if he can make his escape. But suppose for a moment that the police are after him, too, and he knows he can't get away eventually. He may come back and find us in possession. He will know if he is caught it is the gallows, so why not have one more fight? One only hangs once for no matter how many murders. That's why I'm armed and have brought another gun for you. You understand that if Miss Craig is there we can't leave her alone."

"I hope he will have left some of his loot there," Wadham observed later.

"Not a chance," Trent retorted. Because he had exercised infinite care in planning those exploits of other days he did not think Garland would show any less regard for his own ultimate safety. With all his braggadocio, scorn of lesser folk, and loudly flung taunts at inferior minds, he would neglect no precaution. Wadham's idea that the gigantic man, luggage laden, was seeking suitable lodgings in unseemly haste was almost farcical.

"He has dropped into some snug haven where perhaps some of his things were already stored, his presence not unexpected and his actions not such as to seem sus-

picious," Trent declared. "If we see him again it will either be on account of some amazing luck on which we ought not to count, or because we call in the professionals and give them the chance to currycomb this old city."

"I thought that you had such scorn of the police," Wadham remarked.

"The police could find him far more easily than you and I. Look at the machinery at their disposal! The police do their bit very well in ordinary cases. Finding Garland would be one of them, but out-guessing Garland would be too much for them.

"I begin where they leave off, and that is where I'm better than they. You may ask why. I've a better education for one thing and a better knowledge of past crimes than most policemen. Also, I'm a better psychologist."

"Do you mean"—and Wadham's voice was sad—"that we shall have to give up?"

"Unless we have a clew, we must. It won't be pleasant. It will be pointed out that for weeks we have kept the news from the authorities that we knew where the murderer of the Marquis of Launceston was hiding. I'm not sure that I shall enjoy describing my midnight visit to Woodlawn." Trent observed that Wadham stirred uneasily. "And the inspectors and superintendents won't care for stolen Rembrandts or 'Girls With Water Jars.' We shall be pilloried in the press."

"Ought we to inform the police now?" Wadham asked.

"Not on your life," Trent said quickly. "We are going to look for clews first. If we get nothing, then we must confess."

The prospect of censure pleased Griffith Wadham as little as it did Anthony Trent. He knew that while success would pardon all, failure would call down official reprimand.

Woodlawn, when they came to it, seemed wholly in darkness.

"She's gone," Hammond said dolefully.

"Wait," Trent counselled, and rang the bell.

So long a time had gone and there was no answer that Trent was preparing to scale the wall when he heard the click of a door.

It was Lora who let them in. Although there was astonishment in her greeting, Trent saw no alarm.

"Where's Mr. Garland?" he cried.

"Gone," she answered. "I am alone in the house; there's not a servant here."

"We'll all come in," Trent suggested, "and listen to your story."

It was to the library that she led them.

"This is the only room I've had a fire in," she explained. "Servants are coming to-morrow. The charwoman just left."

As Trent had supposed, Garland left the night of that day on which he had come face to face with Captain Hammond. The circumstances were unusual. He had gone without recrimination or threat. He had made no mention of Hammond at all. Lora admitted fearing some explosion of temper when she was alone with him. He even discussed the menu of the dinner to be offered to the unwelcome guest, although he did not speak Hammond's name. But underneath his suavity Lora thought she could detect a vast but controlled emotion.

At three o'clock he had asked her to do something for him which was of great importance, he declared. This was a visit to Hampstead. She was to take a note to some one and await an answer. It was arranged that she should go in the motor, but at the last moment something went wrong with the steering gear. Looking back, the girl believed he had deliberately damaged it.

She went north by train and bus. The address was difficult to find, and when she had found it there was no man living there bearing the name on the letter. She saw now that she had been sent on this fool's errand to give him time to make his arrangements for flight.

"What about the servants?" Trent asked.

"They were all out of the house by five. Directly I went he dismissed them and gave each one two months' wages. Naturally, they did not object. I should never have known about it if the cook hadn't come back for her umbrella, which she had forgotten. She said that he had told her the death of a relative called him from England."

"Has everything been taken?" Wadham asked.

"Everything that he brought here," she answered, "and some of those boxes were so heavy two men staggered under them."

"He could carry them," Trent said. "That's what he did, but he couldn't go through the streets of Hampton Wick bearing them on his great shoulders and not attract police notice. He must have taken the river route to safety."

"The punt is gone," Lora told him. "I traced his footsteps down to the boat-house."

"Wasn't there a launch?" Wadham demanded.

"Yes, but it would have been useless to carry those big trunks in."

"Is the motor still here?" Trent asked.

"Yes," she said. "But there's no chauffeur; he was dismissed with the rest."

"Was it a foggy night when he went?"

"There was quite a thick mist when I came back at night."

"What time was that?"

"My train got in at half past ten. I wandered over Hampstead for hours."

"I can visualize the whole thing," Trent said slowly. "He had the house clear so he made his preparations without haste. He had no doubt already ascertained that the punt would hold his baggage, so he loaded up and drifted down the stream to some landing place already selected." He sighed. "If only I had been warned in time. He was prepared for murder that night. Can't you imagine the strain of having to move all that cumbrous stuff alone, unaided, and yet determined to leave nothing behind him?"

Hammond sat silent. The happiness he experienced at being with Lora was robbed of its full flavor by the realization that it was due to his impatience Garland had escaped. He remembered that Trent had advised him to wait in town until the answer had come to his cable.

"It was all my fault," he said gloomily.

"I blame Miss Craig for it," Trent said cheerfully. "It was she who drew you."

The girl looked at him reproachfully.

"It was my fault," she said. "I ought never to have gone. I went because I want-

ed to be away from him and not give him the chance to ask about Captain Hammond." It seemed to her that never would she shake herself clear of the feeling that none of these men eager to help her would prevail against Charles Garland.

"Cheer up," Trent commanded. "This collective melancholy is too high a tribute to pay even the arch uncle. Look at Hammond. He's pulling a long face when in reality he ought to feel overjoyed you are free of Garland forever. He has nothing to sigh for."

"Am I?" she asked. "Am I really free?"

"Yes. I'm the one with the real solid grievance. I'm the one he has tricked. I'm not modest like the rest of you. I have my own specialized form of conceit. One of them is a belief that I'm as good a man as Garland. I planned not only to get him, but that treasure-trove, and here I find myself checked by a midnight flight in a punt! My only immediate revenge will be to drink some of his vintage wine. I hope he didn't clear out the larder?"

"But he did," the girl explained unexpectedly. "Not the wine, but every bit of the tinned things, three pounds of tea, and a whole Edam cheese."

"He thinks of everything," Trent commented. "He knows it is wiser just now not to go out shopping, so he takes his supply with him. I hope he has left something. We plan to dine here, Miss Craig."

"I have butter, eggs, and bacon, and some other cheese."

"That's bully!" Trent said. "Here is where I propose to call Wadham's bluff. He told me once that among his minor accomplishments was the making of Welsh rarebits. I specialize in omelets, rum preferred. Bob, what can you do?"

"Very little," Hammond replied, gloom still sitting heavily upon him.

"You can make fires and have this old house warm and cheerful. On to the coal bins! Lora will show you where they are. Not you, Wadham," he added softly as the curator made to follow them. "For Heaven's sake leave those blessed children alone for a few seconds! Doesn't an authority on art possess any romance?"

"I never thought of that," Wadham admitted.

Outside the door Hammond took the girl in his arms. "Darling," he whispered, "Trent says everything will be all right. Oh, Lora, how lovely you are?"

"I'm not," she said, laughing. "This strain has made me look fifty."

"But it's over. Let us forget everything except that we are together."

In the library Wadham was not readily to be cheered. Trent only laughed when he jumped at the sound of a cup falling to an unyielding floor.

"That means a kiss," he explained. "What if they do smash the Woodlawn hired crockery? Don't you realize they are two delightful young people in love and filled with hopes and dreams of the future?"

"Which events may contradict," Wadham returned. "Their future—"

"Is in my pocket at this very moment, and it's a good one. When you go to find the cheese for your rarebit, tread firmly and sing snatches of song. No pussyfooting on this great night. I'll be busy elsewhere."

While the three others occupied the kitchen and prepared a scratch meal, Trent made a careful examination of the windows. Those he thought might offer easy entrance he screwed up. He had almost completed a rough and ready burglar alarm when he was summoned to the dining room.

Haut Brion, great wine as it is, does not blend well with scrambled eggs, and the three men thanked fate that Garland had left his Scotch behind him. The dinner, although sketchy in its outline, was a distinct success. It was when he had come to the coffee and liqueur stage that Trent beheld his stage set. He addressed himself to the girl.

"I told you I was going to cable to a confidential agent of mine in New York. I told him to search hospital and police records and read through every copy of the principal newspapers of the dates given. I told him to find out what happened to Angelo and Horowitz." He tapped his pocket. "His answer came at noon to-day."

Hammond, under shelter of the table, took Lora's hand in his. He could see her extreme agitation.

Trent read the message without comment, as follows:

Angelo Matteo not killed. Collarbone and two ribs fractured. Interviewed father, who said unknown benefactor had given him money to buy store. Abram Horowitz unhurt. Taken to Bellevue alcoholic ward. Bought cigar store with money from unknown source. No warrant issued. License number of auto unknown. No notice in newspapers of accident.

"But I read the notices," Lora cried.

"What you read," Trent explained, "were notices printed on the blank spaces left on newspaper pages. Any printer could fix it so that they looked genuine. It's done in movie inserts all the time.

"All Garland had to do was to fake up a paragraph all about the terrible accident on Second Avenue. You've been tricked by a master trickster, that's all. Your name was never known."

It seemed to the girl that she could never sufficiently thank this man, almost a stranger, for what he had done. He had lifted her from a state of constant fear to a blessed peace. And he had done more than this. He had made Robert Hammond possible. Tears came blindingly to her eyes. She arose from her chair and hurried, wordless, from the room. Trent pulled Hammond back in his chair.

"Let her alone," he advised. "She is going to cry. Then she'll powder her nose and come back and live happily ever afterward."

Hammond clenched his fists as he thought of the suffering inflicted upon Lora by the man they knew as Garland so that he might live luxuriously. "If it takes all my life to do it, I'll make him suffer for this!" he announced.

"You'll do nothing of the kind," Trent said. "You have other work. Do you suppose your Lora is going to be happy and smiling if she thinks you're hunting this super-creature? If you want to break her heart, make him your vocation. Wadham is set in his ways and can't devote himself to the chase.

"With me it's different. I've no special task in life. I have no ties. I claim the right to run Niccolo to earth. If I need your help I'll ask it. I've got a 'hunch,'

as we say at home, that some day he and I shall stand face to face without witnesses and indulge in the greatest rough and tumble fight that was ever staged."

"But what about the police?" Wadham said. "You said if you had no clew you must appeal to them."

"We can't until these young people are married and out of the way. You forget that Miss Craig would be a very important witness. If we have to own defeat let's wait until they are in Egypt or, better still, Algiers. Just now we had better plan how to arrange ourselves to-night. We are not going to leave you alone in this big house, Miss Craig. I think Bob had better camp here on this divan before the fire. Let Wadham occupy the Garland suite. I'm doing sentry-go outside."

"You don't really think he'll venture here, do you?" she asked.

"You can never tell. There's a touch of egocentricity about him that isn't far removed from insanity. Perhaps it's a form of insanity like genius. He thinks dramatically. He moves in splendid gestures. If he suddenly burst through that French window, which I'm presently going to screw down, with a six-gun in either hand, one of us would suffer."

"You ought to have some one here as well as servants," Wadham exclaimed. "My unmarried sister is in town and she has nerves of steel and is a good shot. She'd enjoy it. I think if I told her there might be danger nothing could keep her away. May I suggest it to her?"

"I should be so grateful," the girl answered. "I'm afraid I'm not a heroine in any way. And, Bob, I shall be glad when I have some one to look after me."

"She is referring to my sister," said Wadham. "Don't look so elated."

"Naturally," Lora agreed.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RIVER WAY TO SAFETY.

NEXT day Miss Georgina Wadham came to "Woodlawn" to watch over Lora's safety and preserve Lady Hellesdon's sense of the proprieties. She was a

golfer of note, and was pleased to find a course almost at her door. She liked Lora, thought she needed feeding and laid out three practice holes on the Woodlawn turf.

It was arranged that as soon as the wedding should take place Miss Wadham would remain in Hampton Wick until the expiration of the lease. Her brother would live with her and motor into town each day. She possessed amazing powers of concentration and a putting touch that awoke Anthony Trent's admiration.

"How is it," she demanded when he had thrice made the three holes in seven, "that I have never heard of you before?" She spoke almost with asperity. She had thought to beat him as easily as she had her brother and Captain Hammond and had discovered, instead of a victim, a first-class player.

"I never play in tournaments," he said. In those years when he pursued his hazardous calling in New York he had been as little in the public eye as possible. He hoped such caution would be unnecessary in the future. Miss Wadham examined his mashie with the air of one who believed that if she had such a club she, too, could have lofted over tall trees in just such an amazing fashion.

"It's all in the club," he admitted. "My mashie couldn't be bought for a hundred pounds. Night after night I've seen it climb out of the bag and go stealing away to play alone in the moonlight!"

Miss Wadham forgot her defeat. "I like you," she observed in her direct fashion. "I wish I knew why you want to run into danger by going after this Garland person. Haven't you anything to live for?"

"Nothing worth while," he said gravely. "This chase after Garland is giving me something to keep myself occupied. It becomes a personal matter and I don't want any help in it.

"Hammond has the right to some happiness; don't stir him up to activity. As to your brother, he can take care of himself in a fight, but he plays the game a little too cleanly for his own safety to go after Garland. Uncle Charles is not the sort of a scrapper to throw his hat in the ring and announce that the fight is now on. He'll

break every rule to win. So shall I. It's a battle between professionals."

"I'm not sure that I understand," said Miss Wadham.

"I'm sure you don't," he returned.

"At least I understand one thing," she answered. "And that is Captain Hammond won't be content to sit by while you run into danger. There are three weeks before the wedding, remember. He says his nerves have ceased to worry him. Do I know more of men than you if I have to remark that no bridegroom likes to appear a useless entity to the girl he is going to marry?"

"I'll find something for him to do," he said.

"Have you found anything to do yourself?"

"Yes. I set out this very afternoon."

Miss Wadham had seen him searching the entire house. He had gone about it in what seemed the most methodical way. And yet he had discovered nothing. Garland had been careful. She had to be content with his promise to discuss the matter at the luncheon to which her brother was coming.

"Here is a book," said Trent at the luncheon table, "written by Walter Pater. In it is a book marker placed there by Garland so that Lora should not fail to read the essay on Leonardo da Vinci." He looked at the girl. "That's right, isn't it?"

She nodded her head. "This marker has evidently been torn from the catalogue of a dealer in rare and second-hand books. I propose to run that dealer to his lair and ask him if he knew my uncle."

"Rather difficult," Wadham grunted.

"Perhaps. Tell me, did you ever hear of a publisher named H. Kent?"

"Never. A new man perhaps. I have done little with books of late. Why?"

Trent looked at the printed slip he held.

"Every hear of Moses Browne who lived in 1759?"

"Yes, indeed," Wadham answered. "Who that loves the gentle Isaak can remain in ignorance of the Moses Browne who edited at least three editions of 'The Compleat Angler.'"

"Would the 1759 edition be valuable?"

"Probably. But you must see a bookman about that. Why?"

"Because the man who sent that catalogue to Garland offers it for sale. I'm going to advertise for this edition and send Hammond to interview the dealers. I believe that is just as sound a clew as I'm following." He might have added: "And a less dangerous one."

"Splendid!" Hammond cried. "He looked at Trent gratefully. 'What's yours?'"

"I'm going after the carrier."

"Carrier?" Wadham asked. "What's that?"

"We call them expressmen. It's obvious Garland couldn't go floating far down the Thames in a luggage-laden punt without attracting attention. That he didn't I am certain or we should have heard of it. He has either landed at some riverside refuge long ago, picked out and put his trunks in a place near at hand, or he has had them carted off to some destination unguessed. I'm going to run the electric launch up and down the river looking for a clew."

It was in his first trip that Trent had his initial disillusionment concerning the lock system of Father Thames. Knowing nothing of the river but what he had seen from London's bridges, he believed it possible for Garland to have transhipped his luggage and gone sailing down to London and the sea. He found that Teddington Lock barred the punt's progress on one hand and Molesy Lock on the other. This discovery made his task very much easier. The locks had limited Garland's activities.

He shook his head when Miss Wadham suggested that the missing man might have gone upstream hoping to find a suitable landing among the Kingston wharves.

"I don't think so. I've been looking up punts and estimating what they will carry. The one he embarked in was a fourteen-footer. With the loot in addition to his three-hundred-pound body, it would be ticklish work poling under Kingston Bridge."

While Captain Hammond was impatiently going from one newspaper office to another in search of replies to the advertisement, Trent was making a meticulous search of the river between Kingston Bridge and

Teddington Lock. He was looking for some spot where an anxious man with an overladen craft filled with articles of tremendous value might make a safe and inconspicuous landing.

There were many spots to which Trent's skiff drifted naturally, but most of them had some signal disadvantage. It was not until he came to the empty house with the broken windows that he discovered a place with no drawbacks. It was on the Surrey side and about a mile below Woodlawn boathouse.

From the river Trent could see that its weed-infested gardens did not run directly to the Thames. In order to gain their shelter one had to trespass across a trim lawn. The house, which bore signs of long disuse, was like a piece of desert set in a green and desirable oasis.

By night it would be easy enough to run across the lawns and gain, unseen, the shelter of the disreputable house. Drifting by, Trent could see where Garland might have moored his punt and unloaded his valuables.

He took the skiff back to Woodlawn and then set out on foot to find the road, paralleling the river, on which the house looked. None saw him leap the five-foot brick wall and drop into the garden. Trent knew that behind some grimy pane even now Charles Garland might be watching.

It was not difficult to break in. With automatic pistol in hand Trent made a careful examination of the place. There had been no one in it for many months, he judged.

The stable was empty, but coal had recently been put in. There was no name on the sacks that would serve to identify the dealer. Trent decided to seek out all the fuel dealers in the vicinity and approach them with the same argument. His first demand was to know if they had recently delivered a half ton of coal to the empty house.

He had drawn blank on eight occasions when he came upon a broad and bellicose individual who owned a cart and a stout horse. Sometimes he carted coal. He was a shifty looking man, strong, courageous and unprincipled.

He admitted taking the coal to the house.

Trent's uncle—for such was the relationship adopted—had come to his yard and offered him a bit more money if he would make immediate delivery.

Trent's uncle, said the coal dealer, was the sort of man he liked. Generous, free, and sympathetic to that degree of thirst which the practice of carrying coal engenders.

Trent assumed cockney airs. He hinted at having just such a desire to slake thirst as his uncle had.

"You took my uncle's boxes with you and he said you did it fine."

"Him and me," said the dealer simply, "was pals."

Anthony Trent could scarce forbear to shudder. Pals! This grimy and bibulous toiler and Charles Garland! He observed that the coal dealer was not disposed to be friendly.

"He didn't tell me," said the man, "anything about 'aving no ruddy nephew." Trent saw suspicion born and develop into a healthy and colorful emotion.

"What's that to do with it. You may have an aunt in prison for all I know, but you wouldn't tell me about her, would you?"

The coal dealer burned so fiercely red that the grimy layer upon his face could not dull it.

"You leave my aunt alone," he said with such venom that Trent knew he must have touched upon family trouble.

He drew a pint flask from his pocket. He had filled it with cognac before leaving Woodlawn. Long ago he had discovered alcohol to be the universal loosener of speech and, up to a certain stage, a promoter of ready friendship. The dealer consented to imbibe.

"This is wot yer uncle gave me," he said simply. "Chaps like me don't often get the chanst to gargle with this stuff."

"Uncle was fond of it," said Trent. "So he gave you some, eh?"

"Ole pal," said the dealer, half affectionately, "I jest swum in it."

"How far did you take him?" Trent asked when the flask was almost emptied and he himself had taken hardly a dram.

"'Ow do I know?" the driver returned.

"An' wot did I care? 'E was driving. Very fond of 'osses, yer uncle was; said my old nag was the best he's sat be'ind for many a day. It is a good 'oss," said the driver, suddenly turning combative, "and any toff who comes along with a silver-plated flask and says it ain't, is a ruddy liar." Laboriously, he started to take off a grimy coat. "I can lick any man in Teddington."

"You look as if you could," Trent said pacifically.

"But I couldn't 'ave licked yer uncle," the driver remarked, suddenly ceasing to show wrath. "I give 'im best. Strongest man I ever saw, but he didn't 'ave no cause to fight. Him and me was pals."

"He didn't like many people," Trent hazarded. "He wasn't a philanthropist."

He was desperately anxious to extract from this burly and quarrelsome individual the particulars of that night journey. Plainly the man, already in his cups, must be humored.

"'E liked me," said the driver proudly, "an' I liked 'im. Mutual you might say."

By the deftest questioning Trent gained a knowledge of the night's trip as the driver remembered it. When they left Teddington, Garland, snugly nestling among his trunks, was hidden from observation.

The driver had no suspicion that this retirement was premeditated. It appeared to him that a man who could pay for a ride and had a quart bottle of brandy would want no better spot. It was here that he expatiated at length on those high qualities of the questioner's uncle. Would he see a poor laboring man cold and lonely? Not he.

Garland invited the man to relinquish the reins and have a drink. So while Garland drove his mysterious load to destinations unknown the driver, oblivious of Surrey's topography, drank ecstatically. Why should he care as long as a lover of horses drove and he was permitted to guzzle in peace?

"Haven't you any idea at all where you went?" Trent asked. "Can't you recall a church tower or a public house or a bridge?"

"Didn't try to," said the driver.

"How did you get home? When do you last remember talking to my uncle?"

"The old 'oss brought me 'ome. He

could walk back from Greenwich and not lose 'is way. I'd trust the old 'oss anywhere. I don't remember when I last saw yer uncle. He must have lifted all them trunks off hisself and then turned the old 'oss round and told him to take me 'ome. When the missus woke me up I thought yer uncle 'ad done me brown, but not 'im. There was me five quid safe in my pocket."

"What time did you get home?"

"I don't know. The missus woke me at five. The old 'oss was trying to scratch 'is way into the stable."

Later Trent made inquiries about the driver. He was a local product whose principal weakness seemed to be a love for strong drink. It ran in the family, he learned. An aunt, now in Wandsworth Prison, had engaged a neighbor's wife in combat under its influence and narrowly escaped being held for manslaughter.

From the driver's wife, Trent found that the husband had come home sleeping in the bottom of his wagon. She shared her lord's affection for his horse. Trent had a look at it. It was a fine upstanding brown and it showed none of the neglect that is usually the lot of a drunkard's steed. "Tom thinks more of the old horse," said his wife with a certain pride, "than he does o' me."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE OLD FOX HAS STILL HIS CUNNING.

CAPTAIN HAMMOND had made a discovery. After a few days a Charing Cross Road dealer in second-hand books answered the advertisement for a 1759 Moses Browne edition of the "The Compleat Angler."

The man was a small, soured individual who had never recovered from the shock of having to leave Holywell Street, that narrow and impious thoroughfare, when public improvements swept it out of existence. He regarded Captain Hammond without enthusiasm; he was too smart and well-to-do looking and he knew so pathetically little about old and rare books.

Hammond was in touch with his world again. Lora and he were to be married. The Viscountess Hellesdon approved. She

had amazed him by making him a present of five hundred pounds and hinting that the Lakenhams who lived in Rome were preparing to see that the prospective baronet was suitably provided for. And it all dated, he thought gratefully, from the time Anthony Trent called on him.

He examined the Isaak Walton rather clumsily. The saturnine and dyspeptic dealer sneered at the amateur. Hammond did not at once make the purchase. He demanded to see the dealer's catalogue. It was identical with one from which Garland must have torn the piece of paper.

"Do you send this list out to many people?" Hammond asked.

"Only to those who know books," said the dealer.

"I've seen it somewhere," Hammond said. "I think my uncle receives it. I wonder if you know him?"

"Not if he's anything like you," the dealer said with an unpleasing smile. This young man was too well turned out, too much inclined to expect deference. But his remark gave Hammond his opportunity.

"He isn't a bit like me. He is about six feet three and very heavily built. He weighs over twenty stone, you know. He has fine features and wears a short-clipped beard and a mustache of a reddish-brown color. His eyes, now they're remarkable. A sort of blue-green, set rather close, and they look at you with a perpetual sneer. He goes in strongly for art—Flemish art mainly."

"I know Mr. Garland well," said the dealer. There was a new note of respect in his voice. "I've known him ever since I was in this shop and that's nigh on a score of years. I've been trying to get him an old work on tempora painting for the last six months. So you're his nephew. Well, well!"

It was plain the dealer felt the redoubtable Garland had his cross to bear in the matter of a nephew.

"When did you last see him?" Hammond inspected the Isaak Walton so that the other might not read the expectancy on his face. "Recently?"

The dealer looked at the clock. "About an hour ago."

8 A

In his amazement the precious volume fell to the ground. The dealer snatched it up. "You've taken ten pounds off its value," he cried.

"I'm going to buy it," Hammond said recklessly. "How much?"

The price seemed gigantic and made a hole in his banking account, but it was a small amount to pay for the knowledge he had gained. While the dealer was scrutinizing the check in an offensive manner as if he doubted whether the Piccadilly branch of the Capital and Counties Bank would honor it, Hammond had thought out his plans.

"This book," he said, and paid no heed to the man's incivil attitude, "is a present to my uncle. I'll let you in on a little secret. He and I haven't been on the best of terms and I want to make up. If you'll let me have some paper and string I'll send it now. Of course, you know his address?"

"Naturally. I send him all my catalogues."

Hammond's luck seemed too good to be true. He was succeeding where Trent had so far failed. "You write it," he said. The man made no objection.

The slow traveling pen wrote Charles Garland, Esq. Then it added: Lakenham Grange, near Christchurch, Hants.

"That's his old address," Hammond cried, concealing the disappointment. "I want to know where he's staying in town."

"I can't tell," the dealer said. "I don't ask my customers where they live."

When Hammond departed he left the book in the dealer's care. And the next day he learned something that nearly drove him frantic with chagrin. Charles Garland had been in and now had the book.

"Lord, what a complete ass you are!" Hammond exclaimed to the dealer. "You neglected to get what was most important of all—his address."

"The address is in a letter," the man said sulkily. He handed Hammond a package which felt as if it contained a small volume. "Said he was returning the charming compliment," the dealer continued, "but he didn't buy it here. Went to the cheap shop at the corner. Said it would be within your comprehension."

Hammond tore open the parcel on which his full name and address were written.

"How did he know where I'm staying?"

"You wouldn't mind your uncle knowing, would you?" The dealer smiled maliciously. "I gave it to him. He was sorry I couldn't say where your cousin Anthony Trent was; he knows where your cousin Griffith Wadham is!"

There was a note inside the package. Hammond felt himself reddening as he scanned it. It said:

MY DEAR NEPHEW:

Thanks so much for Isaak Walton. Your consideration has touched my heart. My little present, which cost nothing compared with your considerable outlay, seems the most suitable present I can think of.

Affectionately,

YOUR UNCLE.

The book was a shilling paper-covered volume. Its title was: "How To Be a Detective." It claimed to enable the earnest reader to earn twenty pounds a week and travel in luxury over all the globe. The author guaranteed a position to such as were qualified, but wisely left himself the sole judge of this ability. Garland had underlined one of the sub-captions: "No special intelligence required."

It was not until a week later that Anthony Trent started on what he believed to be a good working clew.

The wedding of Lora and Robert had passed off successfully and the happy pair had left for Northern Africa. Wadham was in Cumberland and Miss Wadham had surrounded herself with golfing friends.

The first task Trent set himself was an inspection of those shops, in his own country termed "delicatessen stores," which were near Charing Cross station. The most likely of these ham-and-beef shops was one looking upon the cross in the approach to the station. Since there was a little restaurant attached, Anthony Trent took his luncheon there.

Upon the counter he saw segments of a luscious veal and ham pie in whose center was a hard boiled egg garlanded with mushrooms. The price of the complete pie was half a crown. It was upon this work of art that Trent grew lyric.

There could have been no easier road to the proprietor's heart. He expatiated upon those who came long distances to buy them, learned gentlemen from the Inns of Court, fathers of families who went to their suburban homes via Charing Cross.

It was time for the uncle *motif*. Trent began to weave it into his score. He had an uncle who had for many years sung the praise of pies similar to these delicacies. There were other makers, but none knew the proper admixture of the ingredients as this proud pie maker.

"It may be my uncle used to get them here." Trent described him with singular deftness.

The proprietor beamed. "He gets them here now." He turned to an assistant. "George, when did that tall, stout gent come here for a pie last?"

"I haven't seen him for a week or more. Must have gone away."

Trent's heart sank. Was this another cover from which the fox had been driven? Another assistant thought he had seen him no longer ago than yesterday buying an armful of morning papers. The man explained that the former customer must have lived near because he had often come in wearing slippers. The man added that his customer's uncle was not looking well, but he could not be mistaken in him.

When he saw that the proprietor was serving another customer, he whispered: "These are the best pies made, sir, but they're a bit rich for a steady diet and your uncle used to eat one a day."

Next day a new resident was added to the Adelphi district. This was a tallish young man with one shoulder a little higher than the other, a poor fellow whose bowed back told the story of spinal trouble. His clothes, although not new, were respectable and his shoes were neat if patched. To the woman from whom he took a room he described himself as an insurance agent.

Anthony Trent was not assuming a rôle that was not rightly his. He was, indeed, an accredited agent for a large industrial concern which supplied him lavishly with its literature. His business now compelled him to go from house to house seeking to insure the inmates against death and acci-

dents. No police constable would doubt his bona fides. He became, almost without effort, one of London's swarming millions, a worker who aroused no suspicions.

He assumed the name of Alfred Anthony and the cockney airs and accents.

Hardly a night went by but found him somewhere in the railway terminus watching the boat trains and scrutinizing the crowds. He was not the saturnine Trent, but the cockney Anthony full of quips and jests and ready to drop a little money at billiards or nap. Indeed, he established a useful reputation locally as one whose love for billiards was as yet unrewarded by any degree of skill at it.

Usually keen for good music and an entertaining play, Trent found this systematic pursuit of Garland more fascinating than any game he had ever played. It absorbed all his energies. Less and less he went to his hotel. He only saw Griffith Wadham because the failure to insure any other victim called down his manager's doubt as to the wisdom of keeping him. He insured the unwilling Wadham and was free to pursue his hobby for another week.

"But is it worth while?" Wadham asked as he signed his name on the dotted line.

"Yes. I feel the man is near me down there in the Adelphi. I am making a house to house canvass, and some day he will either open his door to me or else shout through it, commending me to perdition. I have cultivated what my mirror tells me is a disarming and ingratiating smile."

"That's why I hardly recognized you," Wadham retorted.

The policemen who patrolled the Adelphi district already knew Alfred Anthony. He had spoken passionately of the risks they ran, and sought to insure them until he had learned a governmental scheme attended to that. But his efforts had won for him that meed of official respect which is not given to the man without regular employment.

At length there remained only one Adelphi resident—a recluse named Professor Wright—whom he had not been able to meet. In his character of insurance agent he had learned not only that there was no vacant room in the professor's retreat, but

that the landlady, a light sleeper, had her bed in the room by the front door. Entrance by a pass key would be risky, therefore. The back door, giving on to a grimy yard, was of no use, since there was no other stairway but that by the landlady's door.

Trent chose the house opposite the quarry and a starless night for his roof-top investigation, climbing up the rough brick wall with the aid of the iron waterspout. When at last he pulled himself to the safety of the coping, he thanked Heaven that the late Georgian builders had not scamped their work.

He gazed hopefully at the window over the narrow street. The mysterious occupant had not extinguished the lights. For two hours Anthony Trent waited among the chimney pots. A gentle drizzle caressed him. He dared not smoke. When finally the rain ceased the moon showed Trent that he lay directly in her silver path. It was as he gathered his cramped cold limbs together for the purpose of moving back that he saw a shadow on the blind, vast, nebulous, menacing.

Then the outlines sharpened and he could see that it was that of a man above common height wrapped about with some loosely flowing robe. Trent remembered the bronze and purple brocaded dressing gown Garland had worn at Lakenham Grange, that garment against which he had fired the blank cartridge.

He had with him a pair of folding opera glasses. These he focused correctly and waited for a raising of the blind to show him either Garland—or another.

But the light suddenly was turned out. Then the blinds went up with a click and the window was opened from the top. The man did not immediately retire to his bedroom. Instead he leaned his elbows on the window and looked into the night.

Acutely conscious of the scrutiny, Trent remained immobile. For all he knew, Garland might be gazing at him. He could only see, even with his opera glasses, a vast black form.

There were scores of huge men in London, and no doubt among them many who shunned their kind and welcomed the life

of the recluse. He had, as yet, no proof. He wondered, uneasily, if the moonlight was flashing from the glasses he was afraid to move.

If Garland had seen him, what a situation Trent was in to meet sudden death from a bullet! A revolver equipped with a silencer would do the trick.

Ten minutes went by before the stranger moved from the window. In the black depths of the room Trent could not see what had become of him. He allowed an hour to go by. Then the moon's course brought her to such a position that there was an avenue of safety among the shadows. The descent was not easy. His hands were numbed and the rain made the foothold among the bricks insecure. He landed a little too heavily on the bathroom roof, but apparently none heard him.

Except for an occasional visit to the Savage Club, Griffith Wadham knew little about the Adelphi. It was not easy to find the abode of Alfred Anthony. Wadham hoped, for his friend's sake, that he did not dwell within earshot of that wandering fiddler who played with mournful malice before a dark door.

Alas, Alfred Anthony did. Wadham glared at the musician, a lank-haired, cadaverous rascal, shabbily dressed and down at heel.

"Anythink I kin do for yer, guvner?" the fiddler inquired.

"You can go away," Wadham said with stern dignity. But the street musician did not take this advice. He followed Wadham up the stairs, and for a moment the curator thought he might be running into danger. It was when the fiddler laughed that he recognized Anthony Trent.

"Fooled you that time," said Trent, pushing him into the room.

"What are you doing it for?"

"It is my war paint." He pointed to a chair, garment laden. "That's yours."

A shabby brown suit, surmounted by a black felt hat, was laid out on the chair. On the dressing table Wadham saw a musical instrument upon which he had once wasted youthful hours.

"All specially cleaned and fumigated," Trent declared. "Hired from a man near

Covent Garden who lets things out for fancy dress balls. The flute has played on Margate Pier, and was cheap at three and nine."

"But I'm not going to a costume dance," Wadham objected.

"It will be much more interesting. You are my partner. You must play as badly as I!"

"Impossible," Wadham cried. "At least I can keep on the key."

"So can I, but my aim now is to play as badly as I can and yet escape arrest."

Wadham was a little confused. Did Trent suppose Garland would lean from the window and throw pennies into this abominable hat?

"That's all right," said Trent equably. "Last night I commenced to establish myself by playing the sextette from 'Lucia' in John Street. We will do it together without preliminary rehearsal. Seriously, this man Garland is a brilliant musician. We shall play along the streets until we come to his house. Then we shall ascend his stairs and serenade him at his very door. Man, he won't be able to stand it. Listen to this."

"Stop, stop," Wadham entreated. "Why choose such a noble instrument as a violin for this outrage?"

"Because it permits the operator to sing at the same time. I've got a book of penny ballads, and I've learned one with fifty-nine verses. It's all about a poor girl from Wapping who was trained by a stepmother to steal. She was ultimately hanged, and this song describes the remorse which visited her in the gloomy prison."

"Oh, but dash it all," Wadham cried, "I really can't. It's too preposterous. What would Mr. Piergan think?"

"He would raise your salary. Your sister would be proud of you. If you are reluctant I'll do it alone. A man at your time of life begins to lose his nerve and pretends he's merely being cautious."

"I have not lost mine," Wadham remarked. Then he picked up the flute and played a few notes on it. "They charged you three shillings too much," he commented. "Its tone is ghastly."

"I hope so," Trent said.

Never did a seedier brace of instrumentalists operate in London. There was at first a little trouble with a drunken gentleman who found in their deadly harmonies a soothing quality and announced his intention of never leaving them. Wadham felt it a little beneath his dignity to run away from him, and so come unaccompanied to the covert. But he did so uncomplainingly, having begun to be infected with some of Trent's hopefulness.

It was nearly eleven when they began the serenade to Charles Garland, musical critic. While the "Lucia" music is not of the first order, never has it been played so terribly as it was that night. Wadham rose to awful heights. He wove the simple melodies into fugue form and later turned them into ragtime. Such was his honest enthusiasm that he forgot that screeching wail of the violin which competed with his flute.

They stopped within a few beats of each other, exhausted. There was no sound from any occupant of the room.

"We'll give him something worse," Trent whispered. "'Silver Threads Among the Gold.'"

Even this composition failed to draw the fox. He remained immobile in his cover. But if he was there, he suffered.

"Nothing remains," Trent muttered, "but my ballad. Confound him, he shall have every one of the nine and fifty verses." Instead of his very fair barytone Trent adopted a flaccid tenor with an abominable vibrato. He was careful to outrage every canon of his art and in passages of sentiment, or where he thought it added to the effect, he introduced a falsetto.

Even Wadham, strong man as he was, and nerved to his task, felt himself planning flight. He admitted that the nasal cockney twang had great penetrating powers. The

verses did not scan, and there was not a touch of wit to enliven them.

It was not until the seventeenth stanza that Wadham, who had a better chance to listen at the keyhole than the singer, thought he heard advancing footsteps.

Steps did indeed come as far as the door. Here they paused for the space of two verses and then went softly back to the farther room. Trent was beginning to feel his vocal efforts wasted.

Then firm footsteps came down the passage and a mighty fist smote upon the panels of the door. There was no doubting the voice of Charles Garland. But he did not come out.

"If you are not gone within thirty seconds," he roared, "I shall empty my revolver through the panels. Then I shall inform the police that I have been attacked by burglars."

The musicians made a bound for the stairs. Once in the street they hurried to the cover of their room. If Garland was watching them as they went, he would not recognize Trent. And Wadham looked preposterously different.

"Would he have shot?" Trent asked.

"Unquestionably," Wadham returned. "The Archbishop of Canterbury himself would have done murder after that song."

"You are convinced it was Garland?"

"Absolutely. It appeared to me he tried to disguise his voice toward the end. Shall we call in the police or commit battery on his door?" Wadham was in amazing good temper. The dread of having to be censured for withholding information of the whereabouts of a murderer was lifted. "Why not go back there now?"

"Unwise while he's still enraged and might shoot. We'll try to get him to-morrow. Meet me here at nine in your ordinary garb."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.



COMEDY AHEAD!

Edgar Franklin will prove that there is humor in married life in his next serial.

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Eager Money

By W. P. LAWSON

IF you've ever been to Eager, which is a town in New Mexico some distance from the outskirts of civilization, you got to excuse me for bringing the misfortune to your mind. But if you ain't been there you'll likely be interested to learn what luck me and Allingham had in the vicin'ty, because often it happens that other folks' troubles ain't so heart-rendering but what a feller can make out to listen to them without no great harm did.

When we first come to Eager we figured 'twas misnamed, though we learned different later. It was a plumb quiet place set out on the *mesa* with only the hot sun for company, and a glimpse of the Mogollon mountains off eastward in the distance. They was four or five adobe buildings visible and a plaza with a burro or two nibblin' patient at tin cans—the kind of place where they arrest a feller which snores for disturbin' of the peace. They wasn't nothing eager about the settlement that I could see—except me, wanting to get gone.

But when Allingham showed the roll of money he had onto him in the saloon they was signs of life unveiled. Fellers begun edgin' round and sev'el of the more prosperous citizens drew up to the poker table and begun shufflin' the cards invitin'-like. I reckon they was figurin' on making a killing, but they was disappointed—less'n you put suicide under that head. Because Allingham won from the start and couldn't be headed. Nor it wasn't that the rest was poor players neither, nor that they lacked sand. 'Twas just that old Granny Luck took advantage of a woman's right to vote and put a cross ag'in' the name of Allingham.

Well, I begun to feel right good as his stack of chips kep' getting bigger and bigger. I'd left the ranch where I'd been punchin' cattle to help Allingham wrangle hisself on a sight-seein' tour he was makin', and I figgered that the more cash he had the more I'd be liable to git—and vice verses. So about the time the slotter

showed evidences of drawing to a close I went over to the bar and winked to the bartender and says: "Gimme the same!"

He done so, and it was shore percolatin' stuff.

"That ain't the same," I says, "it's even worse."

"Shish!" says the feller, a little tow-headed chap with a neck handkercher round his neck. "Don't talk so loud—this hooch you're drinkin' is ag'in' the law!"

"Well," I says, "it ought to be."

I was goin' on to say some more, but just then I heard words bein' whispered from down at the end of the bar and them words give me a pause. I snook a glance out of the corner of one eye and seen Job Tyler, the hotel and saloon owner, and the Eager sheriff, which had been froze outen the poker game by now, talking together right earnest.

"Looks like the capital of our little community is gittin' unto itself a new custodian," Job says.

The sheriff agreed to this statement of the conditions, and shakes his head solemn.

"Somethin's got to be did about it," he admitted; "it's got beyond sport now—it's degenerated into a matter of business. P'raps if I was to go off on a hossback trip somewheres and you was to keep yourself neutral the boys could be trusted to handle the matter to gen'ell satisfaction. They ain't had a lynching in Eager for a month or so—they'll be gettin' out of practice."

Well, seems like the idea tickled Job. He was a long superjointed feller with the kind of face that makes you think of autumn and the leaves fallin' and rain drippin' on the eaves and suchlike. He looked as if he was goin' to cry now, so I knowed the sheriff's plan appealed to him. But it didn't make no hit with me at all. There was a chance they'd make the affair a double-header on account of me being an accessory beside the facts, and I begun to get the geese flesh up and down my nervous system. 'Twas just like that knot-head Allingham, I thought, to go and git us into a jam like this. He was allus lookin' for chances to invest his money with the minimum of safety and the maximum of thrills; whereas me, I'm right caushus by nature.

I'd about decided to risk another jolt of prohibition whisky in the hopes of forgettin' my worries by stimulat'in' worse ones, when I heard Job say:

"Your scheme has its attractive side, Mr. Sheriff, but yet I don't hardly think it 'll do. We can't leave the boys take the law into their own hands—they might not stop till they got their fingers on the money also and then how would we get our shares back?"

"By the usual methods," says the sheriff; "I kin arrest a few here and there and frisk 'em, and you kin sell drinks to the rest at the customary profit."

But Job shakes his head.

"It's a mater where finesse is needed. We don't want to leave no loophole which a guest of Eager could complain about."

"He wouldn't complain none," says the sheriff, convincin', "when the boys was through with him."

But Job helt out ag'in' violence, and I begun to figure he wasn't such a bad-hearted old feller after all.

"It's too crude, sheriff. There's a better way just waitin' for us to reach round and light onto it. You best leave the affair in my hands, for the time bein'."

So the sheriff walked off, grumblin', and I decided agin another drink as unnecessary and eased myself over to the card table. I was plannin' on persuadin' Allingham to play safe and lose some of the Eager money back again, because that was my notion of good sense; but I found I was too late. The game was all over, but the congratulations—only there wasn't none.

The Eager fellers was lookin' dazed, like they couldn't realize the extent of the hard luck that had happened. They kept feelin' in their pockets and drawing out their hands agin and lookin' at each another inquiren'-like. And I begun to dread the next move, which I figured would be looking at Allingham and me. But the next step after that I didn't take the time to speculate on.

Allingham, pore feller, didn't git the situation at all. He was right jubilant, like he'd done something to be proud of.

"I reckon I got about all the money in Eager won, Lem," he says, "which makes me a person of some local consequence.

Who was it said: 'Better be first in a little Siberian soviet than second in Rome?'"

"I dunno," I says, "nor I ain't right sure he wasn't loading somebody. There are times when I'd sooner be a also ran than git in the money at all."

Well, Allingham smiled sinnercal, like he thought I was just jealous of his prosperity and says:

"Don't look so solemn, Lem—this is a red-letter day for us. We'll split the pile between us now!"

"No," I says, determined, "we won't do no such a thing. I ain't never been one to accept of no money I ain't earned. I wouldn't feel easy, and that's a fact!"

There must of been something in the way I spoke that give Allingham a pause, becuz he looked at me funny a minute and then flang a glance at the Eager fellers which had gathered in a bunch by theirselves and was talking together earnest.

"You don't suppose," he asks reflectful, "those sports begrudge the few dollars I've won from them to-day?"

"Well," I says, "they don't look so plumb cheerful. A good way to test them would be to give them their dollars back and see if their faces change, after taking."

But Allingham got a stubborn expression onto his visage.

"No, no—I couldn't do that. It would insult them. Another thing, I'd never be able to look myself in the face again if I returned cash I won fair and square. No, we'll have to think up some other plan."

I was fixing to tell him that Job was engaged on the same idee, but about then Job hisself moved over and looked at Allingham, where he was counting over his money. So Allingham begun counting it all over again, more careless.

"Was you planning to stay any great len'th of time in Eager, young feller?" Job asked presently.

Allingham yawned.

"I might if there was any excitement to be got out of the sojourn," he come back. "'Twas right int'restin' this evening for a spell, but now the population of Eager is cleaned out I can't think of any good reason for remaining. I reckon we'll be on our way to-morrow."

Job nodded like he was lissenin' to some-thin' right reasonable. Then he asks:

"Was you lookin' for excitement principally?"

The way he said it give me the fantods, kind of; but Allingham didn't seem to notice nothing. I don't b'lieve he was even aware that the Eager fellers had done finished their confab and was driftin' over toward us, nor that the sheriff had shook his gun loose in the holster and was standin' by the door so's nobody couldn't get apast him. But I begun to feel like some-thin' plumb ardous was arrangin' itself.

"Lem and I have been looking for a little Wild West life," Allingham explains, "but so far we've been disappointed. No hold-ups, no gun-play, no lynchings, no Indians—"

He broke off sudden, and the Eager fellers sneakin' toward us stopped, too, because just then the door busted open and a young feller stepped in dressed in a green suit with a little bronze badge on his shirt, so I knowed he was a forest ranger.

A feller 'd have a right to ask what was a forest ranger doing in Eager, but such a inquirer couldn't ever have visited in New Mexico or he'd know the answer, which is that out there the forests grow on mountain ranges that rise abrupt from the plains and make two different kinds of climate within a few miles of each another. 'Twas like that at Eager, where we was. Some distance to the east was the Mogollon range, most of which was government land called the Gila National Forest. And that's the district I figured this ranger had come from because Eager was the nearest town to the range, and after all, a town's a town when everything's said and done.

Well, when this ranger come in Job moved behind the bar and the ranger lined up on the more expensive side and Job waited for the countersign, but none come. Instead the ranger says shortlike:

"I understand there's a justice of the peace here?"

"You're talkin' to him," says Job; "what kin I do for you?"

"I caught a bunch of Indians off the Apache reservation hunting deer in the hills and took them in. There's thirty-two in

the band. I'm prepared to turn them over to you for trial and punishment."

Job coughed kind of embarrassed.

"Whereabouts did you say you had them Injuns hid at the present instance?"

"They're camped outside, over by the hotel. I'm looking to you to supply them with what they need in the way of food till the trial comes off. You'll be reimbursed later, of course."

Well, Job's eyes bugged out like he'd seen a ghost.

"You left thirty-two ding-busted Injuns over by a defenseless hotel with chickens and a pig roamin' round and a wine cellar containin' ten or twelve gallons of the finest grain alcohol that ever went into good prohibition whisky? You ain't crazy, are you?"

The ranger looked kind of hacked and would have made Job a right sharp answer, I reckon, only Job didn't give him no time.

"Sheriff!" Job calls out sharp. "You step across and mount guards over the liquor and set a couple of deppities around to see that them pests don't get my live stock. Jasper, you go over and see if the chief is anybody we know and what kind of humor he's in. Then come back and report prompt."

With that he relaxed hisself and looked round the room disgusted, and all the Eager fellers looked back at him to see what they'd ought to think about it. Because this Job was a leader among them, seemin'ly.

"Here's a fine mess," Job says finally, "all them Injuns quartered on the town and the town clean out of funds. I declare, it's enough to make a man irr'table!"

His eyes was kind of lingering on Allingham as he ended, I reckon, because Allingham was such a prominent citizen now. So Allingham seen his responsibilities and spoke up cheery:

"As far as funds go, Mr. Tyler, you needn't be discouraged. I'm behind you with every last dollar I've won to-day, including what I came with, the sum amounting to something over four hundred in cash. Furthermore, I'm frank to say the town's credit is gilt-edged with me. I'll take Eager bonds as security, or if you don't care about

calling a special election your personal note for the amount needed will be quite satisfactory."

Job frowned when Allingham mentioned about security and all the Eager fellers begun mutterin' and frownin' to themselves. An' I begun to git right restless, because seems like they'd ought to be able to find a way out of the difficulty without so much talkin' involved. But I reckon that was what Job was meanin' when he says "finesse."

Directly a lucky thought struck Job and he quit frowning and looked right sad.

"I got an idee how you can serve the community of Eager," he say to Allingham, "without goin' into the formality of a loan." He called to one of the Eager fellers which seemed most anxious to stick close by Allingham and says: "Sim, run over and git the sheriff and tell him to bring the chief of the Injuns and we'll hold the trial right now. They ain't no sense in wastin' our substance on them savages when we ain't got more'n enough to eat ourselves."

"Hold on!" says the ranger, who'd been standing round impatient, "they've got to be defended in whatever action takes place. If you'll wait till I've had a chance to communicate with the Indian service—"

"We ain't got no time for no red tape," Job cut in curt.

"And as for a defender," Allingham says quick, "you need look no further than myself. When I think of the pathos of these untutored wards of an ungrateful government, baled hither for a mere peccadillo—"

"Was you educated for a lawyer?" asks Job, hopeful.

"Truth compels me to admit the charge," says Allingham modest like, "I was. And if it hadn't been for my lungs going back on me—"

But Job wasn't caring to hear about Allingham's lungs at the moment. He had a right satisfied look onto his face; but before he could make out to explain what it was that give him the expression the sheriff come in with a big buck trailin' him. It seems he knowed the Injun chief, which was named Hot Tamale in English, and the chief had wanted to try and see if

he remembered the countersign accurate, so that's how they come over together so quick.

But Job wouldn't serve no drinks because he says the saloon had been transposed into a court of justice. I dunno just what he was meanin' by the remark, but anyways he made it stick so all hands went dry. Then Job let on that he was the presidin' judge and everybody must address him as "your honor" even if it sounded queer. And he nominated the forest ranger as persecutin' attorney and says Allingham could be council for the defense, by which he was meanin' the Injuns.

Well, the ranger looked kind of put out and began mutterin' somethin' about law 'n' order, but the sheriff took out his gun and slapped it on the bar and shouted out, "Oh, yes—oh, yes! Court's open and ready for business!" and the ranger kep' quiet till it came his turn. Then Job told the Indian buck what 'twas all about, in ordinary language.

The buck was some surprised at first, because he thought the ranger had invited him and his friends over to have a time. He looked right disappointed when he learned he was arrested and started to ra'ar round and talk loud, but the sheriff took his .45 and waved it up and down a couple or three times and the chief calmed down. So then he got that look on his face Injuns git when they want you to think they're keerkless about what's going to happen and the trial began.

The ranger made a right good talk and used some strong language about how wasteful and ornery the Injuns was and how the innercent deer was slottered for to make a roamin' holiday for the murderin' redskins, without any reason at all except that the said redskins wanted to taste venison steak once in so often and claimed they needed new moccasins and such like lux'rys.

He ended up convincin' on a p'int of law.

"In Section 453," he says, near as I kin rec'lect, "of the statues of 1876, chapter and verse omitted, it says where any Indian found on a national forest shall be null and void and subject to arrest without warning. Furthermore, if said Indian shall

wound, kill, slotter, or maliciously annoy any of the government critters which is held in trust for the people of the United States under bond and in escro, said Indian shall be deported out of the confinement of such forest and turned over to the nearest legally qualified officer for adjudication as to his crime and punishment, the same to be held without bail until discharged out of the jurisdiction of the court or settled in the nearest duly appointed jail, prison, workhouse or hoosegow, so-called. And this, your honor, I submit is the case now before your honor."

Well, the Eager fellers looked at each another admiringly and give a light cheer or two on account of all the words they'd heard for the first time, and I thought for a minute the sheriff would have to drill Hot Tamale, he was that irr'table. But Job didn't give no sign whether he believed what the ranger said or not—just motioned to Allingham to take the floor.

Allingham riz up easy like and ca'am, like it wasn't a matter of no great moment one way or t'other. He let on that he wasn't overly interested in the outcome of the affair, so long as justice was did to all parties concerned.

"My hon'able opponent," he says smooth and polite, "has made a great point of the law in this matter—but what is law, feller citizens?"

He gave a pause and looked round at the Eager fellers inquirin' like, but nobody answered. Mebbe they didn't have a right clear notion on the p'int, I dunno.

"Law," says Allingham, answerin' himself, "is the will of the majority enacted into statu'es. But has the majority in this case been consulted? Have the Indians been consulted? Have the deer in question been consulted? No! A hundred times no! But I won't follow up that line of argument, because I don't know any too much about the law myself. All I will say is that this is preëminently a case not for law, but for justice, and with that I claim to be familiar."

He gave another pause and the Eager fellers clapped their hands a time or two, because they could see by Job's face he was gittin' persuaded to Allingham's view. So

then Allingham begun to open up his voice and wave his hands right eloquent and tell how the government kept the deer so's hunters from the East could come out and git them and take the horns back home and set 'em up over the fireplace for to lie about to their friends and fam'ly, and how bad the deers felt when a lot of strangers was allowed to chouse 'em hither and there when all they really craved for was to be skelped lovin'ly by their immemorial friends the Injuns. It wasn't justice to the deers.

"Nor is it justice to the noble red man," he come out loud and scornful, "the first indigenous inhabitants of this g-great land we call ours, but which is really theirs by virtue of discovery. Isn't it enough that we've killed them in their thousands, taught them our noxious vices of drinkin' vile poison and gambling the fruits of industry away at the gaming table, stolen their manhood, put their effigies on the ignominious penny coin, stood them up in shame before our cigar stores, sold them glass beads and red cotton and talking machines and such trinkets—isn't that enough, without robbing them finally of such innocent pastimes as hunting in the forests and fishing in the streams their forefathers planted and would even now be enjoying but for two things: first that they're dead and second that it's against the law?"

Allingham stopped abrupt with his hands raised up in the air like one of the statues he'd been mentioning and Hot Tamale busted into tears and tried to kiss him, but Allingham resisted. I'd begun to feel right sorry for the Injuns whilst Allingham was talking and Job had to use his pocket handkercher a time or two before he could control hisself enough to give judgment on the rights of the case. And even then it was sev'el minutes before he could make hisself heard, because the Eager fellers had come out for Allingham strong and was yelling fit to bust. They trusted Job, I reckon, to be on the right side and to take keer of their best interests.

Well, finally the racket quieted down and the court blowed its nose solemn and says:

"It would be beyond human endurance for my honor not to be affected by the plea council for the defense has put up for the

culprits who was taken in corpus delictus, as us jurists say. But it would be similar impossible as an official sworn to uphold the law, for me to overlook the fact that the defendants is guilty. So I hereby fine Hot Tamale and his outfit the sum of four hundred dollars, cash money."

The ranger looked pleased, sort of, and the Eager fellers looked like they didn't know what to make of it. Hot Tamale was the only one that seemed right sure of his feelin's, and he let out a yell you could hear clean to Silver City, eighty mile away, and a bunch of bucks came lopin' over and busted into the saloon to see what all the row was about. Mebbe they figured the chief had had his first drink of Job's licker, I dunno.

So the sheriff rapped on the bar with his gun and called for order, and when the noise had eased off Job says:

"The defendents is fined four hundred dollars, but it's the decision of the court they don't have to pay it."

They was a brief pause and Job glanced at Allingham thoughtful, and I begun to feel as if we wouldn't have to wait a great while to find out how Eager was goin' to git on its financial feet again. Nor I wasn't far wrong in my suspicions, because Job says:

"The council for the defense made the p'int that this court had ought to be more concerned with justice than with law, and the court agrees with him. In pursuance of that there idee the privilege of payin' the fine is reserved for Mr. Allingham, who has given eloquent testimony of his desire to help the afflicted and the erring to the extent of his capacity. Mr. Sheriff, collect the fine!"

Well, you'd of thought them Eager fellers hadn't half tried to make a noise before, the way they took on. 'Twas right tedious, for a fact. But I didn't cheer none, nor either did Allingham. He didn't even make any sounds when the sheriff advanced toward him without a countersign, only a gun held keerless where it would go off easy. But he looked a whole lot.

When the transaction was completed and the court had locked up the money in the cash register, Job says pleasant:

"Supper's about ready at the Eager Hotel, young feller. The meal's on the house to-night—except includin' them Injuns. And the next time you come to Eager we'll try to furnish you with a thrill equal to that you've no doubt enjoyed to-day."

But Allingham was looking at me.

"I don't know how I'm going to settle with you, Lem," he says, "so if you're anxious perhaps we'd better call off the

balance of our trip. I can't very well ask you to stick on trust."

Well, I figured he'd acted right sensible in not trying to keep the sheriff from taking the money off'n him when he didn't have no chances, so I says without thinking:

"I'll stick to the sightseein' trip long as you do, partner!"

Then I happened to think, so I says:

"If it ain't *too* long, that is!"



M O V I E S

I SUPPOSE that Billy Brown
Has the finest place to play in
That there is in our whole town;
And although my pa was sayin'
"Brown's back lot is full of truck!"
I think Billy Brown's in luck.

There's old wagons, carts and sleighs,
Tumble down and gone to ruin;
But they're great for movie plays
Like the ones we kids are doin'.
Movies full of punch and plot
Out in Billy Brown's back lot.

There's a trunk that's awful old,
Where it came from is a wonder;
We pretend it's full of gold,
And all kinds of pirate plunder.
So it fits in great, you know,
With a movin' picture show.

Billy's even got a boat,
Bum old thing that no one uses;
But we play that we're afloat
On the most excitin' cruises;
We get wrecked and cast away
Up at Billy's every day.

They're some pictures, it is true,
And it's piles of fun to make 'em,
Betcha we'd be famous, too,
With a camera to take 'em;
But that's one thing we ain't got
Out in Billy Brown's back lot.

Ed Payne.



The Turquoise Arrow

By **HORACE HOWARD HERR**

Author of "The Carbon Copy," "With a Crew of Skeletons," etc.

CHAPTER VIII.

A LINE FROM WATERMAN.

ONCE down the ladder, my captors carried me through the tunnel and dropped me on the floor of the snake corral with just about as much consideration as a cow-puncher would show toward a quarter of beef for the chuck wagon. They pulled me back and sat me up against the wall directly opposite the snake garden and the alcove, and they were so rough about it that my pool of mental tranquillity, as Rip Jaimson would say, was more or less disturbed.

Straining at the rope that was wound about me only hurt my wrists and arms, and I had to admit finally that I was hog-tied good and proper. The only part of me that I could move freely was my tongue, the which didn't help much because

none of the heathens seemed to understand English or Mex, either sacred or profane.

I knew that when these reservation Indians were clothed and in their right mind—that being a figure of speech, of course, seeing as how none of them ever wear a full set of clothes—they wouldn't be in a hurry to put a white man over the divide. When they know anything, they know a short trail to a long trouble is to kill a white man, the which festivity always brings the government agent and a bunch of leatherneck cavalymen on to the landscape, the same remaining there until they have the guilty persons.

But just knowing that didn't do me much good, for the reason that these Indians were not clothed and in their right mind. They were all worked up with many nights of dancing and celebrating and expecting something wonderful to happen when the

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moon was right. They were half crazy with their superstitious expectations, and there's no way to call the turn on any of them when they are in that condition.

The first thing they did was to fan me, and the first thing they found was that turquoise tipped arrow which Tony had taken from the horn of Ann Frazier's saddle, and which I had slipped into my shirt bosom when I skinned off my chaps on a ledge of the cliff. The discovery of that arrow more or less interrupted the deal. The three of them started grunting at the same time, and each in turn inspected the arrow, and then one of them ducked into the tunnel to appear in a few minutes followed by something which, at first glance in that uncertain light, looked like it might be Methuselah's grandfather. At any rate, he was old enough to speak something that was meant for English.

"Where you catch 'em?" he asked in a voice as shrill as the squeak of a wagon wheel turning on a dry axle.

"Find 'em," I replied.

"This make you Hopi queen."

"Who ever heard of a he-queen?" I asked; but he didn't seem to get me on that.

"You no catch 'em otro?"

"Yes," I said, nodding my head by way of emphasis, "white squaw catch 'em otro."

That started another parley, in which the four of them grunted at each other and then they all grunted together.

Finally old Wrinkles said: "You make 'em big white chief, marry white squaw. Hopi have white queen, white chief."

"No sabe," I said because that didn't make sense.

"Great Spirit, he tell 'em Sun Cloud, Hopi have white queen. Hopi catch 'em white queen. You steal 'em white queen. You marry white queen, be big white chief."

It finally soaked through my cranium that Señor Wrinkles was proposing that I bring back the white queen they had found and marry her and become the big *jeffe*. There were two reasons why I couldn't accept that proposition. One of them was that I already had a job wrangling horses

for Williamson's outfit, and the other reason was Waterman.

But I saw possibilities in that proposition, so I stalled along for a few minutes to give old Wrinkles a chance to exercise his English, and then I said "*Bueno*," the which is the same as saying that I called the bluff.

"You no make 'em fight?" Wrinkles asked as he laid his hand on old Betsy.

"Be Hopi white chief, no make 'em fight," I promised; and the four of them made a dive for me to see who could be the first in getting the hobbles off my hands and feet.

The way those four heathens bowed and scraped around me from that moment on made me think for a few minutes that it really might be worth while to be the big white chief of the Hopi, but I had some important and unfinished business waiting for me back on my range, and if I lingered on the chief job too long I knew that Bull Martin was going to miss me or that I would miss him, the which would have disappointed me more than the former. And yet, if there was a way out of this crazy mess without making a half dozen Indians look like a porous plaster I was willing to lose a little time and save considerable ammunition.

Well, before I knew it Wrinkles was leading me to the alcove from which Ann Frazier had sprung within the hour. Two of the Indians, without hesitating to see if their insurance was up to date, stepped into that garden of snakes and brushed them to right and left as if they had been so many sticks, and thanks to their kindness in this particular, me, without my boots on, walked to the alcove on dry land, as it were.

Wrinkles motioned for me to have a seat on the very bench on which I had found Ann, and as he carefully coiled up my rope, the which I had been tied up in, and laid it at my side, he explained:

"Pretty quick, catch 'em big chief clothes."

With that the four of them disappeared into the tunnel, and I was sitting there with my eyes on those snakes below me and my mind on how I was going to look dressed up in eagle feathers, when the big white

chief that was to be came within an ace of jumping right through the mountains and out of that *kiva* place.

Something cold, like a snake, touched me on the neck and couldn't have done me any more damage if it had sunk its fangs clear through me. I made a swipe at it, and was on the verge of leaping out of the alcove when I got a squint at the thing. There never was a snake that long or quite that color. That was the new rope that I bought for Waterman, and it had been let down through that hole in the top of the alcove. I looked up at the ceiling, and there were Waterman and Ann looking down at me, and the hole was big enough to drive a yearling steer through. I just grabbed hold of that lariat and said "Pull," the which I didn't have to say the second time.

As soon as my head was through the hole and I had gotten over my surprise on being greeted with sunlight, I began to talk fast. "Quick, Ann, get this rope around you so we can pass you down again."

"Never!" Waterman protested.

"Please, now, don't argue! How are we going to get off this rock? Ann can't climb down the cliff, and if this cluster of Indians get hostile we couldn't get down ourselves. Now I've got it all fixed so that we'll walk out of this village in a blaze of glory. Come on, let Ann down there, and then let me down, and then you stick right here until I call for you, which won't be long."

Waterman was going to make me show my hole card, but Ann took a hand. "I'll trust Red any place, any time, John."

I knew right then that it was settled for John. The rope went around Ann and we literally tucked her through the hole and let her down to the alcove floor and the bench. When she released the rope we pulled it up and I tucked myself through the hole and Waterman let me down and then pulled up the rope.

"Here's that turquoise arrow that caused all the trouble," I said as I gave her the curious thing. "Just give me that other turquoise arrow head that was hanging about your neck."

"I haven't it," she said. "I gave it to John."

I was in the very act of yelling up to John to have him send down the arrow head when Wrinkles came in by way of the tunnel and behind came at least a dozen braves decked out in feathers and fox skins and antelope hides.

Wrinkles got the thrill of his life when he saw the white queen and the big white chief seated on the bench in the alcove, each by one another, as it were, and I'll stake my reputation, the which ain't so bad when it's laundried and nicely ironed, that Indians *do* get excited, because that herd of braves went milling around that room until I thought they were all plumb locoed for good and all, and then old Wrinkles, paying no attention to the snakes in front of the alcove, stepped up and handed me the eagle feathers. I put them on, and if I do say it myself, I'll bet that I looked like a regular chief.

Immediately several of the braves cleared away the snakes right in front of our throne, and old Wrinkles said:

"Come."

Well, we come, Ann holding to my hand as we stepped gingerly through the snake garden. The braves divided, half of them going ahead of us into the tunnel and half following us. Wrinkles stepped between Ann and me, taking each of us by the hand, and that's just the order of the procession as it climbed the ladder and came out onto the court.

But it didn't stop there. It wound around the court three times, crossing a spot on which all the braves jumped and stamped their feet, so that it gave forth a hollow rumble like a great drum. The third time the leader turned sharply to a ladder which led up to the roof of the first tier of 'dobe houses. Up this we climbed. He continued up another ladder to the second shelf of huts, and on to the third, until I thought we must be practicing a fire drill or something.

Then things got interesting. We went into a hut the top of which was even with the surface of the tower rock on which Waterman was waiting. Once inside this hut, we went up another ladder and out on the roof from which our line of march went onto the rock.

Waterman wasn't supposed to be there, evidently, and his being there like that almost broke up the show. Wrinkles rushed up to him to investigate—and right there was where my romance ended. The first thing that Wrinkles saw was that turquoise arrow which Ann had taken from about her own neck and hung over Waterman's neck.

Back to me came Wrinkles, and by signs and semi-English asked me to show him the other arrow. I didn't have it, because I had given it to Ann. She held it up. Immediately, and without much ceremony, either, they cut me out of the parade, put Waterman in, formed a circle around Waterman and Ann, and began to dance. Somehow I didn't feel much like dancing, me still being in a bootless condition and my feet ruined by so much ladder climbing and tramping around on so hard rocks.

While the dancing and howling went on on top of the big rock, the whole village piled out in the court and everybody danced but me, and I didn't have no cause to dance, because I had just lost my job as chief together with the emoluments of the office, as Rip Jaimson might say, the which, as far as I could see, was Ann Frazier herself.

However, when a fellow has just escaped from matrimony, even if it is only a Hopi ceremony, he can't be sorry for himself very long at one time, and having been up all night, the which isn't natural for me unless I'm seated in a chair with a green covered table in front of me to rest my arms on, I stood there on one bootless foot and then the other, wishing they would cut the ceremony short so that I could get back to Napoleon and be on my way.

Finally the dancers lined up in a crescent facing the court, and old Wrinkles led Ann and Waterman to the very edge of the cliff where all the natives could see them. He took Ann's right arm and Waterman's right arm, and placed them so that they crossed each other at the wrists, and the minute that he finished that hocus-pocus, the natives in the courtyard began to yell and dance again.

The party on top of the big rock broke up, and Waterman, having no idea what it was all about, Ann and I followed old Wrinkles

down the ladder trail along the houses and into the court, where I undertook to hold some converse with Wrinkles and finally got my rope over enough information to conclude that the new chief and his squaw were expected to be the guests of honor for the snake dance which was the next item on the bill of fare, so to speak.

I had a hard time making Wrinkles understand that a great while chief might have more important business than standing around watching seminaked Indians juggle snakes, but he got the big idea finally, and made me understand that the white chief and his squaw were supreme; that they came and went as they pleased and no common Indian had any right to question their going hence or coming hither.

That made it easy. I told Wrinkles, after a phoney conversation with Waterman and Ann, that the white chief and his squaw must go quick, but that they would surely come back when the moon was right, to the great glory of the Hopi people.

That was good enough, and, believe me, when I found Waterman, Ann and me lined out in the path which led down from the mesa to the desert, with the Indians dancing and shouting along the mesa edge, but making no move to interfere with our going, I felt just as if I had shoved my quarterly pay into a pot against a pat hand and the other fellow had said, "That's good," thereby letting me get away with a pair of deuces.

When we got down to the horses I found the crippled Indian had fed and watered them. I reckon it was the first time Napoleon ever saw me without my chaps and boots on, and I didn't blame him much for making an awful fuss about it when I tried to throw a saddle on him.

Even a range horse has some pride, and if he didn't want to appear in public with me when I wasn't more than half dressed he ought not to be censured. However, I couldn't waste much time explaining matters to him because I wanted to get quite some distance on the trail before night, and there were three of us to go and only two horses.

In spite of my hurry, Waterman and Ann kept asking me fool questions about

what it all meant, and how it happened that we were permitted to go, and why the Indians hadn't taken the feathers from Waterman and why they hadn't demanded the queen clothes from Ann, until I had to say something that would shut them up.

"Listen, you two," I finally said, "the whole thing don't mean much. You two have merely been married—"

"Married!" both of them exclaimed more or less extemporaneously and simultaneously.

"Uh-huh!" I said. "That's all. At first they wanted to scalp you, but some of the old bucks thought that wasn't torture enough so they decided to plunge the two of you into matrimony, without warning, and leaving you there to sink or swim."

Ann got all red in the face as she looked at Waterman, and Waterman got all wrinkled in the face as he looked at me and said:

"Don't you reckon you-all are going too far in this foolishness?"

"You don't mean to say that matrimony is foolishness!" I exclaimed in surprise.

"Red, you are impossible!" Ann exclaimed.

"Maybe so," I admitted, "but I mean to tell you that one John Waterman is now the great white chief of this Hopi village and you have been made his squaw according to the laws of this tribe. I tried to save you from such a fate, Ann, but old Wrinkles wouldn't stand for it. If you hadn't hung that turquoise arrow thing about Waterman's neck, you would now have a matrimonial connection with the best little horse-wrangler on the Clear Creek range."

Waterman scowled at me as if he would like to have shut off my wind. I thought I knew what was in his mind. Presently we would have to tell Ann some mighty bad news. Waterman didn't like my being flip and flighty when I knew that a real sorrow had overtaken her.

However, I was playing out my own string in my own way, the which was the best way to play that I knew anything about. I finally got Waterman where I could whisper to him: "Not a word about Dad Frazer until to-night," and with that warning, I went back to acting the fool, the which it ain't never hard for me to act.

9 A

We had the horses ready for the trail, and Waterman and I had decided that it wasn't worth while to try to get our chaps and boots from off the ledge a hundred feet or more above us, when a thought struck me. It struck me most forcibly in the region of my stomach.

We had had no breakfast. When I miss my breakfast and don't wolf about it until two hours after breakfast time, it is a sign that things have been moving pretty fast and that I have been suffering from great mental excitement. Even though I hated to lose the time, I knew it would not do to hit the trail without a feed, especially in view of the fact that there was a woman in our party, so I dug the kit off my saddle, and with the help of the crippled Indian, got a few sticks of wood together and a pot full of water, and hopped to it.

No sooner was the fire started than I thought I had made a mistake. Waterman called my attention to several bucks coming down the mesa trail in great haste. I wondered what brand of trouble they were bringing, and I didn't have to wait long to discover that it wasn't trouble at all, but jerked deer meat and maize flour and some dried fruit, the which they promptly delivered into the hands of their great white chief and his squaw, and squatted down on the sand at a respectable distance to smoke cigarettes out of my makin's while I cooked up a scandalous mess of grub, the which wasn't any too much for the three of us.

An hour later we were on the trail, everybody feeling pretty well satisfied except Napoleon, and I think all that was troubling him was he was jealous of Waterman's cayuse because there was a pretty woman riding behind Waterman's saddle.

CHAPTER IX.

A POSSE FINDS ITS MAN.

ONCE when Rip Jaimson and I invented a way to beat a roulette wheel and went over to Brivie's place to lay the foundations for a vast fortune by breaking his bank, we walked home in the small hours of the morning, me wearing a burlap sack and Rip draped in an old horse blan-

ket, but even that parade didn't come up to the one that kicked up the ancient dust on the Cañon Diablo trail as Waterman, Ann, and I wended our weary way homeward, as the poet might say, after the ceremonies on Hopi Mesa.

Waterman was wearing the eagle feathers of a great Hopi chief. Ann's buckskin leggings and skirt, all decorated with beads, made that part of her look like the Indian princess of a story book, but the pretty little vest which left her arms and shoulders exposed to the weather wasn't intended for traveling on the desert, and the grain sack I had ripped down one seam, so that it could be used for a cap and a cape rather spoiled the upper half of the picture.

As for me, there I was with nothing on my head but red hair, no chaps and no boots, and my shirt and pants all mussed up from climbing up the cliff and wrestling Indians, the which isn't a game I care much for.

But all of us were so glad to be on our way toward the home ranch that we had no complaint to make, except that I hated to think what my account with old man Barnitt would look like after I had been in for a new outfit. But Waterman still had his gun and rope, and I had old Betsy and my rope, and as long as a fellow has those working tools the future can't look altogether black.

My chief worry was whether or not we would meet a posse the next day looking for a man suspected of murder and horse stealing. My real business is horse wrangling and looking out for Williamson's best interests. When I can make it fit in with that business I'm quite willing to rescue a woman who has been kidnaped by Indians, and if the woman happened to be Ann Frazier, the rescue would give me a great deal of pleasure and, as Rip Jaimson used to tell me, when pleasure begins to interfere with business a man ought to cut out business.

If Tony had played the cards according to the layout I gave him, the indignant citizens of Winslow ought to be coming toward us on the cañon trail faster than we were going toward them, which, according to my calculation, ought to bring us within

speaking distance of each other by noon the next day. If the posse happened to be led by Bull Martin roarin' for speedy justice, and if Lengthy Arnold, with his lame shoulder, happened to be in the posse cryin' out for a short shift for crooks long and short, I would feel that I had done a tolerable good job of starting something that would be beneficial as well as edifying for our growing community.

If Bull Martin and Lengthy Arnold wasn't in the bunch it would be a sign that I ought to mind my own business, the which is horse wrangling, and keep away from higher mathematics and things requiring gray matter in the head.

Those were anxious hours for me because if I do say it myself, I always thought pretty well of myself, and if I fell down on this job my reputation was ruined.

We took things easy enough through the heat of the day and by dusk we made the little spring in the canyon where Waterman and I had rested on our outward trip. Wood was plentiful like watermelons on a cactus vine, but I managed to get a few sticks together for a camp fire and while the three of us made out like we were getting a real meal, Waterman being as talkative as one of those wooden Indians you see in front of a cigar store, I made the beginning on an unpleasant job.

"Tell me, Ann, how did those Indians round you up?"

"Well, I had started for your shack on the Cottonwood, Red, cutting across to save time. My horse stumbled on an ant hill or stepped in a gopher hole and I swung off to see if he had hurt himself. I was just beyond that old ruined 'dobe and just as I was ready to remount my foot struck something in the sand. I looked down and it was this strange arrow. I stooped and while I was fastening it on the saddle the horse bolted and I discovered four Indians had rushed out of the old 'dobe ruins. They were on me before I could make a move and the horse wouldn't let them catch him and they wouldn't permit me to approach the horse alone. Finally they gave up trying to catch the horse and led me over in that deep draw which leads up to the lava beds, where they had a pinto

hobbled. They put me on the pony and immediately struck off into the lava country."

"Did they treat you rough?" Waterman asked.

"Quite the contrary," Ann hastened to assure him. "Of course, I was startled at first, but my second thought about it was that they wouldn't dare to hurt me and while I was very much provoked, I wasn't afraid. It was astonishing how fast we traveled. If I had not seen it with my own eyes I never would have believed that these Indians could make such time on foot. Really, time and again, they had to slow the pace so that my pinto could get its wind."

"How long had you been at Hopi Mesa before we found you in that snake corral?" I asked.

"Not so very long, Red. They had some sort of a celebration when we arrived, most of the villagers rushing down the trail to meet us. I was turned over to a select few of the squaws who took me to that hut next to the great rock, spread quite a banquet for me, and decked me out in these togs.

"I could see that they were putting on airs for me and, if I hadn't been worrying about what might be going on back home, I'd have enjoyed the experience as a real lark. Finally a real old man came and led me from the hut and down the ladders to that open space on top of the mesa and into the underground chamber where you found me. It was only when I saw all those horrid snakes that I began to be afraid."

"You had started for my shack," I reminded her, "and you didn't arrive. Maybe there's some unfinished business that ought to be attended to."

"I wanted to warn you that I'd heard two men planning to drive off your saddle horses," Ann explained.

"When and where did you hear that?"

"I heard it at the Pictured Rocks beyond Shale Hill, about three hours before you and John appeared on Tucker's Flat. I had walked over there to look at the strange Indian drawings and to explore the ruins of the old villiage on the top of the mesa.

"While I was there two men came out

over the west trail. They stopped in the shade of the very ledge on which I had hidden when I saw them coming. One of them was a heavy-set fellow I've seen in Winslow and he was very angry because some one had struck him. The other one was a tall man I had never seen before. They planned to drive your horses down the bed of the Cottonwood to the cañon into the lava country. They talked for half an hour before they moved on, and by the time I walked home and got the horse saddled and started for your place by way of the trail, John and you arrived and you know what happened. There was no chance to tell you then and as soon as you were gone, father and I—well, you see—"

"We are all friends, Ann, and the easy way to tell it is just to tell it," I said when she hesitated.

"You are right, Red. After you and John rode away, father was furious and I thought it best to take the rifle and hide it. I went through the draw back of the house and climbed the west bluff of Shale Hill and hid the rifle and, maybe, had a cry, and sat there and wondered where all this foolishness was going to lead us. It was dark before I realized I had forgotten all about the plot against you. I hurried back to the shack and started for your place on the Cottonwood, cutting across the desert and—well, here I am."

That simplified matters considerably. Ann had identified Bull Martin and, with the aid of old Betsy, I had marked Lengthy Arnold. When you've hung one dirty job on a pair of coyotes, it's quite natural to suspect them of all the dirty work that goes on in that locality. Bull and Lengthy didn't get away with the horses. Maybe they tried to make a profit out of a bad night by stopping at Dad Frazier's 'dobe on the way home!

"Ann," I said, taking myself by the neck, as it were, and literally forcing myself to the hardest job I ever felt called on to do, "did your father have any enemies?"

I could feel that she was looking at me hard, and I didn't dare return her gaze. But there's no fooling a woman, I guess.

"Red, has something happened to father?"

"Yes, girl, something that happens to all of us just once. He's gone over the divide."

I was glad that Waterman moved near her and sat down beside her, and if he put an arm about her, that's none of my business.

Never had I felt so miserable and so useless in my life. I wanted to say something that would help the girl, but it seemed as if what little language I knew had deserted me and Waterman showed no disposition to help me out. Maybe we sat there before the embers of that fire for an hour, the only sound being the subdued sobbing of the grief-stricken girl. Then she got control of herself and asked how it happened.

"We don't know much about it, Ann," I explained to her. "The next morning after Waterman and I were at your place, Waterman rode over to see why your big horse had been running wild on the desert and he found your father dead, on the floor of the shack."

I can understand now, how that sounded to her. I couldn't understand then. She slowly disengaged herself from Waterman's arm and, almost imperceptibly edged away from him. Right away I knew I'd said the right thing in the wrong way and I hastened to make an honest effort to undo the damage.

"Don't take the wrong trail, Ann. There are some men who couldn't kill even their enemy by hitting them in the head when his head was turned. Tell me, Ann, did you father have money about the place?"

"Some gold, I believe, quite a sum—at any rate, several little bags of it."

That reminded me of something. I began to search myself for the little bag I had picked up from the sand in the canyon near the tamarack bushes. I found it and brought it out. There was scarcely enough light from the embers to show what it was, but I held it down close to the glow.

"Please look at this. Does it look familiar?"

Both Ann and Waterman leaned forward.

"That is one of the bags," Ann said.

"How did you get it?" Waterman asked, and the emphasis he placed on the "you," told me that instead of making matters better I had made them worse, the which seems to be the easiest thing I do.

I didn't reply to that question because I knew that suspicion grows fat on explanations. I went over to the horses to see if they had cleaned up the bouquet of cornstalks and wild grass the crippled Indian had provided for them. Seeing that they had done their duty by the stuff that was as filling as dried apples and water and nutritious as a picket fence, I divided between them the last peck of oats and gave them fair warning that there was to be no more grain feed until they were back on the Cottonwood. While Napoleon and the filly ate their dessert I put in the time trying to figure out the whichness of the how, as Rip Jaimson used to say, of human nature.

Ann Frazier had enough evidence on Waterman to hang him, if loving her were a crime, and yet the mere statement that Waterman had been the unfortunate person to find Dad Frazier dead, had caused her to shy from Waterman like an outlaw shies from a saddle. Women are like that.

Waterman knew that I had dropped everything to help him find Ann and yet, when I showed up with a little bag of money that once belonged to Dad Frazier, Waterman asks, "How did *you* get it?" in a tone which plainly showed that what he intended to say was, "Where were you that night when you came back early in the morning with a wild story of rounding up your horses?" Men are like that.

Ann had a case, all right. The evidence was circumstantial, but I reckon when you look on some one as the highest card in the deck circumstantial evidence hurts more than real facts. Waterman had a case, too. I was out alone the night Dad Frazier was killed and I came in early the next morning bringing Frazier's raw boned roan relic of a real horse with me.

But I had a case that looked so good to me that being somewhat of a gambler myself, I was willing to back it to a showdown though I knew the showdown was mighty likely to call for bullets rather than chips.

After throwing the saddles onto the horses and loading Napoleon down with all the furniture we were carrying, I meandered back to Waterman and Ann and told them that we could make Daze's water hole before sun-up, the which was quite important to us and more important to the horses, seeing as how we were now out of horse feed both real and imaginary.

As evidence that Ann and Waterman had suddenly drifted considerable distance apart, Ann asked me if she might ride with me and I, being an obliging person, said it would be all right with me if Napoleon would consent.

That made it necessary for me to transfer the furniture to the filly and hold a family conference with Napoleon and warn him if he didn't behave himself while we had company, I surely would take him out behind the woodshed and give him the doggonedest licking he ever had in his life. He knew I meant it, too, and when I gave Ann a stirrup and pulled her up behind my saddle, Napoleon pranced along as if he were leading a parade with a brass band right behind him.

I fully expected that a posse of outraged and indignant citizens would be trying to make Daze's water hole by sun-up and I wanted to be there first. We made it easy enough, and although Ann insisted that she needed no rest, I pleaded tired horses and we made ourselves uncomfortable, the which was the only way any of us could be under the circumstances, waiting for sun-up and other things.

Well, both of them arrived in due season. The sun arrived first, thereby giving me an hour of anxiety. But finally I heard hoofs pounding the trail and a few minutes later the posse was in our midst. I was tightening cinches on Napoleon when the posse arrived.

Bull Martin was among those present and Lengthy Arnold came also, like Satan. That spoke well for the way Toney had played his hand, but Bull Martin was riding Waterman's Dixie Gal and Lengthy Arnold was perched on the apex of Dad Frazier's raw-boned roan relic of a real horse, and that wasn't just according to the layout I had given Tony.

Tony wasn't there, but Tim Bromley was, and Dave Larsen and Big Bill Macfarland, and Dude Rowley, and, Lord love him for a two-fisted, square-dealing friend, Alkali Jones was there.

Others were there, enough of them that it looked like a meeting of my creditors. I was looking over the bunch so carefully that I didn't observe what Ann or Waterman was doing or how they took the surprise party. Bull Martin pulled up in front and swung awkwardly from Dixie Gal and right behind Tim Bromely got his feet on the ground. Lengthy Arnold pulled up the Frazier horse on the left edge of the herd and remained in the saddle and I had to smile when I saw Alkali Jones pull up on the right edge of the herd and remain in the saddle.

"What's the big idea?" I asked, seeing as how it's more or less the practice to exchange greetings when friends meet in the midst of the big dry, "If you fellows are out to collect on my I.O.U. I warn you that payday is goin' and comin', but it ain't stoppin'."

"We're looking for a stranger who was last seen near Dad Frazier's shack," says Bull Martin, "and if you don't mind, we'll hold a little conversation with your friend here."

"Yes," says Lengthy Arnold, "I reckon we don't have to go no further."

"And just to be sure there's no misdeal," says Bull, "we'll take that shooting iron."

Bull had drawn his own gun and he now pointed it in the general direction of Waterman and I'm sure I don't know how the cards would have fallen from then on if it hadn't been for that Kentucky horse.

Dixie Gal had spotted Waterman and seeing no reason why she shouldn't go to him, moved up until her flank came into view and I guess the first fellow who saw that the horse had been burned with a branding iron was Waterman himself. I saw his face turn white and Bull saw it too.

"Toss out you gun!" Bull ordered.

"I'll toss your black soul into hell, if it's the last thing I do on this earth," says Waterman and I'll take an oath on a stack of Bibles that he said it just as if he were asking some one to pass the bacon.

He made a step toward Bull and Ann Frazier had to step into the picture. She stepped in with her arms extended in the general direction of Waterman's neck and she stepped in more or less between Bull and Waterman, all of which wouldn't have made so much difference perhaps if she hadn't stepped in just as Bull pulled the trigger on that old cannon of his.

Let a brainy, red-headed man put in his nights cooking up a scheme that can't go wrong, and then let a woman step into the picture, and all bets are off.

CHAPTER X.

WATERMAN AND BULL GET THE ROPE.

LIFE is too short to figure, Rip Jaimson used to tell me, the which was too wise for me until that little fracas at Daze's water hole.

When I discovered through Tim Bromley's aid and assistance that Lengthy Arnold was wearing a lame shoulder and that Bull Martin was willing to drag a sack over Arnold's trail and set 'em up to me, not to mention lending me real gold money, I figured that I knew who had been stampeding my string of saddle horses. I figured that they'd jump at the chance to slip from under and hang it on some innocent victim.

I figured that if I sent word to Bull that I was trailing the stranger in our midst, the which was Waterman, and was going to get him and bring him in over the Cañon Diablo trail, he and Arnold would see to it that a posse met me bringing with it plenty of rope. I figured that it wouldn't be hard for them to round up a posse if Tony passed the word to a few of my friends. I figured that if Bull and Arnold did show up with a posse and insisted on then and there stringing up Waterman, that was enough evidence for my purpose, the law requiring only that evidence must eliminate any reasonable doubt, the which wasn't hard to eliminate from my mind when Bull Martin and Arnold were concerned.

I figured that if we found Ann she might help establish an alibi for Waterman, backing up Tony's testimony, the which had to be backed up because he was a half-breed.

That was a tolerable string of figuring for a fellow who can't count without the aid of chips, and, maybe, it wasn't much to wonder at when I got the wrong answer.

Ann Frazier stepped in just in time to get a bullet from Bull Martin's smoke pole high in her right shoulder, and that unforeseen circumstance, plus the fact that some one had burned a bastard brand on Dixie Girl's flank, made a wild man out of Waterman and I hadn't figured on a wild man at any stage in the game.

When Bull dismounted from Dixie Gal he kept the bridle hanging over his arm. When the horse spotted Waterman she moved up until she had pulled the reins taut, and when Bull let go with his shooting iron Dixie Girl threw up her head, thereby giving him such a yank that the second shot he fired, as Waterman sprang toward him, went wild, and by the time I had caught Ann in my arms, Waterman had caught Martin in his, and while I was getting Ann to a place of safety behind a ledge of sandstone, Waterman was giving Bull Martin such a lacing as never was witnessed in these parts before or since.

There was a brief struggle for Bull's gun, and when Waterman had wrested that from his opponent, the real fun began and, according to all the invited guests, the show was worth the price of admission.

Waterman hit Bull Martin on the jaw and would have knocked him through the posse if it hadn't spread out to give the fighters air. As Bull went down I heard Waterman say:

"I reckon you-all have branded your last horse and shot your last woman!"

Whenever Waterman began to "reckon you-all" you-all could play the bet straight up that it was going to be just about as he reckoned it would be. I knew that and, being somewhat of a gambler myself, I would have bet a quarter of beef against a shoulder of salt pork, the which is my notion of nothing to win, that Bull Martin wasn't going to prosper.

The lay of the land at Daze's water hole isn't ideal for fist fighting. Coming into the cañon as Waterman, Ann, and I had come, you are on a plane about forty feet higher than the bottom of the cañon from

there on. The change of levels is abrupt, making a sheer drop, and it was only by using a wagon load of dynamite that they were able to blast out a road from the upper to the lower level along the east side of the cañon wall.

Daze's water hole is a spring that comes out of the left ledge of the cañon on the upper level not more than thirty feet from the step-off. The posse draped itself around the fighters and across the cañon so that there was considerable open space between them and the edge of the ledge. In that clearing Waterman was demonstrating how easy it is to knock a man down and how hard it is to make him get up and be knocked down again.

But Bull made a better fight than I would have expected him to make, from the accounts I got of the scrap, it being understood that I saw only the beginning, me and Lengthy Arnold being absent when the finish came along.

Tim Bromley told me that Waterman knocked Bull down three times and kicked him to his feet as many times. The third time up Bull clinched, and before the posse realized what the game was, he had rushed Waterman to the edge of the drop. The two men hesitated there a second and, according to Tim, when Waterman saw what the game was he helped it along, showing as plainly as could be that he was so rip-roaring locoed he was willing to take that forty-foot drop onto the rocks below if he could carry Bull Martin with him, the which he would have done if it hadn't been for Alkali Jones, who is the handiest man on the Clear Creek range with a rope.

As the two men tottered to that fall, Alkali's rope dropped over them and he gave his horse the pull that set him back on his haunches, and when the posse looked to see how far the entertainment had fallen, it was hanging pretty much in a cluster no more than six or eight feet over the ledge.

Tim said that it took some time to pull the two men back to terra firma, as Rip Jaimson would say, and by the time they got them up Bull Martin had cashed in for the lack of air, while Waterman still had enough wind left to invite any one else who felt the need of exercise, to take up the fight

where Bull Martin interrupted it by forgetting to breathe.

Well, that was that, according to Tim, except that there came near being a free-for-all fight when it was discovered that Ann Frazier would have to be carried in on somebody's saddle, the which argument Ann herself settled by choosing Alkali Jones because he had been so handy with a rope and thereby saved Waterman from splattering up the landscape below the cliff.

When Waterman sprang at Bull and the posse didn't interpose itself to save the peace and dignity of the law, Lengthy Arnold must have seen the light. He was on the edge of the gang, and before any one noticed, excepting yours truly, he had swung Dad Frazier's raw-boned roan relic of a real horse around, and was snaking it down the wagon road. By the time I could leave Ann and get to Napoleon, Arnold was on his way down the cañon and well out of range for even old Betsy.

Well, it wasn't in the cards that Lengthy was to bolt that way, and I wasn't going to have a posse go to all that trouble just to land half of what we were after. I tickled Napoleon with my toes and left the posse to see that Waterman did his duty.

Being somewhat of a gambler myself, that little jaunt on Lengthy Arnold's trail probably saved me a lot of money, because if some one had offered to bet me as much as two bits that Dad Frazier's old nag could run Napoleon until he seemed to have seven kinds of rheumatism, I'd have given them such odds that the rest of my natural life would have been plastered with a mortgage.

We went down the cañon to the first cross cut. We followed up that gorge to the burro trail leading up to the desert level. When I got up on the level, Lengthy was three hundred yards away. That looked easy. I told Napoleon to go get 'em, and he went, but when he began to close in, that old horse of Dad Frazier's uncoupled himself and began to get close to the sand, and pretty soon I looked back to see if Napoleon's hind legs were going the same way as his front ones, because it looked to me as if the front ones must be jumping one way and the hind ones jumping the opposite way which would make us go like hell

up and down, without moving out of our tracks.

After we had trailed that Frazier horse two miles without getting within speaking distance for old Betsy, which was all I wanted since I had nothing to talk over with Arnold, him knowing as well as I did and better what was on my mind, I began to do a little figuring.

As a result when Lengthy Arnold came up the draw to Mellon's Spring, he found Napoleon and me waiting for him. Of course, he turned off and we had another chase, and along toward dusk when Lengthy came over the Big Ridge just west of Coyote Cañon, where there's water semi-occasionally, he found Napoleon and me waiting for him.

He turned off and we had another little chase in the cool of the evening and I could tell that Dad Frazier's raw-boned roan relic of a real horse was feeling the effect of being denied his drink. I sure felt sorry for the old horse, but if he could outrun Napoleon on a straight go, it was up to me to cut across lots and make the water holes first, the which I could do in daylight, but the which I had as much chance of doing at night as one lone, last chip has of breaking the bank on a roulette table.

From the time we turned away from Coyote Cañon it was a game of follow the leader until I saw that Lengthy was leading me toward the Shevelon country, where the big irrigation ditch would furnish water for him and the horse in spite of all that I could do.

Right then I began to converse with Napoleon, pointing out to him that it didn't stand to reason any horse could pound sand for seven or eight hours without water and keep ahead of a horse that had made stops at two water holes—assuming, of course, that the horse which had made the water holes was a real horse and not an imitation. I didn't mince matters with Napoleon; just up and told him that if he didn't want me to believe he was an old four-flusher, he'd better close up the gap between me and a certain horse rustler.

After that we began to get some place, and by the time all the stars were on watch I was so close to Lengthy that he turned

in the saddle and took a wild shot at me, the which told me that he realized Dad Frazier's horse was getting down to the last turn of the cards.

It ended at the old Mormon crossing, through Antelope Draw. Lengthy must have hit the steep trail going so fast that the big horse couldn't hold his feet, because, when I got to where the trail dips, I could see that raw-boned relic of a real horse, the which I am willing to say was a noble son of a noble sire, in a shadowy heap no more than fifty feet ahead of me.

I set Napoleon back on his haunches and hit the sand, because, if I wanted to live long and prosper I didn't want to be sticking out in the starlight, so to speak, from the back of a horse at the top of a steep trail, with plenty of rocks below me big enough to hide even Lengthy Arnold and a man-sized shooting iron. I led Napoleon back a few yards so that Lengthy couldn't plug him without coming up out of the draw, the which I proposed to see didn't happen, and then I crept back to where the trail dipped to see if I could locate something interesting.

It was good starlight, and I was playing the deep shadows and ducking from rock to rock, because it wasn't according to nature that Lengthy Arnold and I would leave that draw both enjoying good health. There was a chance that he had broken some bones when the big horse fell, but I didn't dare to play that chance, because the only bones the breaking of which would really count were in his neck.

For a half hour or more I moved about among those rocks as silent as a snake, and, like a snake, most of the time I was on my belly; but instead of having my tongue sticking out ahead of me, I had old Betsy out there, with the trigger pressed hard and the hammer held back with my thumb.

I had worked my way pretty well down the side of the draw before I located Lengthy, and he made a fool mistake. Instead of permitting me to work by him and then making a break for my horse, when he caught me in the act of ducking from one boulder to another, he let me have it, thereby apprising me of the fact that he was fifteen paces to my left, not to mention

the fact that he put considerable lead into my left shoulder, causing me such a shock that I let my thumb slip off the hammer when Betsy was pointed in his general direction.

I was crouched when he shot and if I dived face foremost among the rocks it was not because I was trying to fool any one. My first hurried shot didn't do much more than shoot a hole in the air, but Lengthy wanted to see how far he had knocked me and he raised his head and shoulders above the boulder behind which he had been hidden. They stuck out like a mountain in moonlight, and Betsy would have got a bull's-eye on that shot if I had been blind, which nobody ever intimated I was.

Arnold fell forward, sprawling over the boulder, and I knew that his rustling days were over.

I got to my feet, the same being bootless, and searched myself to see how much of me was still there. I might have been worse off, and then again I might have been better, but I managed to get over in the trail to where the big horse lay, meaning to put him out of his misery; but that wasn't necessary. The game old boy had broken his neck.

That made me feel kind of sick, because I knew Ann Frazier thought a heap of that horse and I really had a hard time getting up the trail to the desert level. When I got up to where I could see Napoleon I had to rest.

Blood was running down my left arm, which was about as much use to me as a fifth ace in a square game, and I felt as if all I had in my head was feathers, the which may have been the case. I dragged myself over to where Napoleon was getting his wind, gathered up the leathers, and managed to get into the saddle.

Well, we made it back to Coyote Cañon, and while Napoleon got his drink I was afraid to get out of the saddle for fear I couldn't get in again. Half the time the stars seemed to fade out, and the other half of the time they seemed to be going around in circles. I headed Napoleon toward the Cottonwood, but didn't have the nerve to tell him that it was thirty-five miles away, and being so far gone that I

was jabbering, I says to Napoleon, I says to him:

"You second cousin to a kangaroo, see-in' as how you've been on a vacation the last few days, better get down to business! Get me home, you lop-eared old burro, because if you don't get me home I'm not going to get there."

It wasn't fair for Napoleon to take advantage of me that way. I remember perfectly that I said "Take me home," and then I repeated it, and in spite of that, about the middle of the next afternoon, that damned horse pulled up in front of Crasswall's, where I'd been doing most of my poker playing, and it was Dude Rowley himself that came through the swinging doors and found me more or less draped over my saddle, perfectly satisfied but unconscious, as you might say.

My creditors had several anxious days before the Mormon doctor from St. Joe told them that it looked as if I would pull through. The pill roller told them that I had been near to cashing in for keeps, but Tim Bromley always insisted that I had been stalling because I was occupying his best room, rent free, with a dozen men hanging round to see if I didn't want some one to ride to Albuquerque or Denver and fetch me a stick of barber-pole candy.

The fourth day the pill roller said that I could have company, and when Bromley opened the door of his two-roomed adobe and invited my company to step in and view the remains the house wouldn't hold them. Dave Larsen and Big Bill Macfarland were among those present, and they hesitated long enough to tell me that as soon as they learned from the pill roller the locality where I had caught up with Lengthy Arnold they had gone out and brought in the saddles and everything else worth saving, including three small bags of gold found in the pockets of the late lamented, as Rip Jaimson would say, the which isn't to be taken too seriously in this case, because no one was shedding any tears for either Bull Martin or Arnold.

The last man in was Alkali Jones, and I gave him the tip to hang around until after the draw, so to speak, because he had information on his person, the which I

wanted a whole lot of. When the boys saw that I wasn't going to make a speech they hid their disappointment and went on about their business, thereby giving Alkali and me a chance to tête-à-tête, the which is a two-handed game you don't have to have a deck to play.

"Tell me all about it," I said when we were alone.

"Well, it was the best fist fight I ever saw, and that Kentucky colonel sure did a good job—"

"Tell me about her," I interrupted. "I knew that Bull Martin was through the minute I saw Waterman start for him."

"Well, we brought her in, and found that she wasn't dangerously hurt. Then we loaded her into Barnitt's buckboard, and Waterman and I took her to St. Joe, where she could be near women and the doctor, and she was doing fine until doc came home from his first trip over here and said as how it looked as if Red Bronson was going to give up horse wrangling and take up harp playing, and then she got to crying, and—"

"Alkali, you're seven different kinds of a liar!"

"I'm telling you the Gospel truth. She wept enough tears to raise the Little Colorado out of its banks, and the only dry weather they've had in St. Joe set in yesterday when doc came home and said you were out of danger."

"Alkali, you know what you are!"

"I'm telling you the Gospel truth, and I'm going to lay the cards on the table. Don't fool yourself, Red, the girl's in a bad way, and that doctor can't save her."

"Alkali—"

"I know it's a blow for you, and it's rotten luck that I have to be the fellow to tell you. Maybe you'll think I don't know what I'm talking about, but I know the symptoms. That girl is gone—"

"Alkali, have complications set in?"

"They have that! Complications of the heart! That woman is up to her ears in love with Waterman."

If I hadn't been flat on my back and tied up in bandages and weak from the loss of blood, I would have punched Alkali right in the nose. I looked at him for a minute, and then it began to dawn on me

that he thought he was not only telling me news, but bad news.

"Well," I said, "it serves her right."

"But she's getting a good man, Red. That Waterman *hombre* stands on his feet and looks you in the eye."

"Well," I said, "it serves her right, and Alkali, did you ever stop to think on what I'd do with a wife like that?"

He looked at me and grinned, and I grinned right back at him.

"I always said you loved a horse more than you could love a woman," Alkali remarked.

"However that may be," I replied, "I'm free and foot-loose, meaning that no woman has put hobbles on me yet."

Just then Tim Bromley poked his head in from the other room and reminded Alkali that the doctor had said my chances of getting well were pretty good if I didn't talk myself to death, thereby cutting short our tête-à-tête by about one tête.

CHAPTER XI.

RED BRONSON CHANGES HIS MIND.

FOUR weeks went by before I was strong enough to get out of Tim's best room and wobble down to Crasswall's social center. Bull Martin's place was closed with a legal document pasted on the front door which began, "Know All Men by These Presence," and went on to inform whoever had time to read it that the property was in the hands of the district court pending an investigation and settlement of the estate of the aforesaid deceased and demised Martin.

One interesting phase of the investigation was that it looked as if some one was going to be paid two thousand and five hundred dollars reward, the which was the total sum of rewards offered some two years before by the Lucky Buck Mining Company and the Territory of New Mexico for the apprehension, dead or alive, of one Risto Rapello, alias Martin Thomas, alias Risto Thomas, to which list, so the rangers who were on the case insisted, should now be added, "alias Bull Martin," who had led a holdup of the mining company's stage, kill-

ing two men and getting away with ten thousand dollars of real money that was meant for pay rolls.

Of course I, being duly sworn, had to depose and say what I knew about the late unpleasantness, and when I finished deposing the rangers and Squire Quinn said that I had made such a case of horse stealing, robbery and murder against Bull Martin and Lengthy Arnold that there wasn't a court in the Territory of Arizona that would not extend me a vote of thanks.

Some of the boys were sore because I hadn't tipped off my hand about the murder of Dad Frazier when I had sent word to them by Tony, and I had to do some tall talking and call on Ann Frazier and Waterman for help, before I convinced them that I didn't find out about the Frazier affair until after Bull Martin and Lengthy Arnold had taken the trail with a fixed posse to prove how ready they were to hang an innocent man, the which was the final proof I was after that both of them were dirty crooks.

When my big boss, Williamson, had the whole story, he gave me an extra quarter's pay, and when I reminded him that Ann Frazier didn't have a horse to ride he agreed that I should present her with the gray filly Waterman had rode on our excursion to Hopi Mesa and then, just so she wouldn't have to ride the critter bare back, Williamson went over to Barnitt's and bought the best outfit in the place.

About two weeks later Waterman rode over from St. Joe, he having made that village his home while Ann was down there where she could have women about her and be near the doctor, and he and I sat in the corner of Crasswall's place and had a long conversation.

"Red, you-all don't belong in this country," Waterman finally said. "Come and go back to Kentucky with us."

"Us!" I exclaimed. "What do you mean by us?"

Waterman got all red in the face and said:

"You know who I mean by us. I've loved that girl ever since she used to go barefooted and make faces at me whenever I dared to go by the Frazier place. I knew

then that if it was up to me, the Frazier-Waterman feud was ended.

"She used to sneak away and I used to sneak away and we'd meet over on Turkey Creek, where our respective fathers wouldn't see us, but somehow Colonel Frazier got wind of how matters stood. Then the feud took my father and it got so hot for Frazier that he decided to sell out, and he up and totes his girl way out here to this forsaken country. He didn't know it, Red, but I bought his place, paying twice what it was worth and sending the money to him in gold. And now there's just Ann and I left, and we understand each other."

"And you are going back to Kentucky?"

"As soon as you can travel," Waterman said as if it were all cut and dried.

"I don't see where I come in," I said. "From all you've told me about that place, it sure is dangerous. I don't think that climate would agree with me."

"Red, the Frazier and the Waterman lands make up most of one county. I've got horses, lots of them, good ones like Dixie Gal. You're coming along with us to take care of the horses."

Well, we had a lot of conversation that afternoon, but we didn't get any place, and about ten days later, when I was getting to feel like a human being again and wondering how long it would be before I could climb onto the apex of a maverick from the scrub-oak range and ride him to a showdown, Waterman and Ann rode over from St. Joe, and the three of us had dinner at the Chink's.

"Red," says Ann, "you are going home with us."

I didn't say anything. I was thinking about that word "home" and the way she said it. It's a strange word when it's said just right and apt to make a fellow feel all lumpy inside.

"You've been the dearest friend I've had in this country," she continued, "and I want you to come. Do you know anything about Kentucky?"

"Only by taste," I stammered, because it was up to me to say something. "They certainly turn out good liquor."

She laughed at that and reached across the table and laid her hand on one of mine.

"The way you talk one would think that you were a bold, bad man. You don't know anything about the green hills, and the woods, and the streams, and the homes and the people. Red, you'd be happy with us, and I'll not be happy without you."

I was slipping, and I knew it.

"Well, maybe I'll go," I conceded.

"When?" Waterman and Ann asked in the same breath.

"When I can ride again," I said, the words slipping out before I could shut my mouth.

Another week slipped by before I felt sure that I could climb onto Napoleon and stay there. He had been eating his head off and kicking boards off the shed all the time I was loafing, and I knew he was getting as tired of a life of leisure, as Rip Jaimson would say, as I was, so one afternoon I sneaked into the corral, slapped the saddle onto the old boy, led him out to the edge of town, climbed on and said: "Here goes nothing."

We went it easy all the way to the Cottonwood and most tickled Tony to death by telling him everything was all right, for, to tell the truth, Tony was mighty worried because he had permitted Arnold and Martin to ride the Frazier horse and Dixie Gal on that last trip.

Alkali Jones had explained it to me, in this fashion:

When Bull Martin began to collect the posse which Tony, on my instructions, sent into the Palace of Pleasure for the purpose of getting invited, he said he and Arnold would lead if some one would round up a couple of good horses. Alkali himself knowing that we held twenty or thirty saddle horses at the Cottonwood camp, had suggested that the two men double up with some of the boys until they reached my camp and then outfit there.

Bull agreed, and when the gang dropped in on Tony, Bull spotted Dixie Gal at once and insisted on riding her. Arnold wouldn't have any but the Frazier horse, and in spite of Tony's vigorous protest, in order to make Bull and Lengthy believe they were running the round-up, the gang backed them up and let them take the horses. Sometime during that night, Bull Martin burned

that brand on Dixie Gal's flank, thereby sealing his own death warrant.

We had supper with Tony that night and eased our way back to town in the cool of the evening. By the time I had turned Napoleon into the corral again, I knew I was fit to ride and, although Waterman was pressing me every day to say when I was willing to start east, I kept stalling.

But the show-down had to come and the afternoon on which Waterman rode in from St. Joe and announced that he had received a voucher from Santa Fe, New Mexico, which, on the face of it, appeared to be good for two thousand five hundred dollars, and threatened to make it payable to me, the stalling came to an end. Waterman said the reward money belonged to me. I said that he had earned it when he put an end to Bull Martin. The argument covered a good deal of territory without getting much of any place until Waterman said:

"Red, you-all are going to make me feel bad if you don't take this money. You-all know I didn't have nothing to do with rounding up those crooks. I've got money—more than I'll ever need—and I'll always feel like I had taken something that didn't belong to me, if you don't accept this."

"Well, if you're going to cry about it," I said, caving in a little, "I'll take a split on it. You take one thousand and I'll take a thousand and we'll throw a celebration for the posse and our friends with the other five hundred."

"I reckon you've made a deal!" Waterman exclaimed. "And just so there'll be an occasion for a celebration, Ann and I are going to have Squire Quinn tie a matrimonial knot for us this day week. We'll have the ceremony at high noon, the celebration immediately thereafter, and the three of us will be riding east in the cool of the evening."

"I'll take the bet!" I said without much enthusiasm, and after Crasswell had cashed the voucher, keeping out five hundred pesos as treasurer of the celebration committee, I found myself with one thousand dollars in my pocket and my departure from the Clear Creek range just one week off.

I was in a trance that week. I rode

hither and yon on old Napoleon and wondered what he'd do when he got back to a grass, tree and hill country where you can't hardly see more than down to the next corner.

Napoleon was a range horse; all he knew was deserts, scrub-oak country, cañons, cactus and corrals. He had been underfed and thirsty so much of his life that I knew it would only be a question of time after he got to Kentucky bluegrass and grain feed, with water three times a day that he'd be on crutches with the gout and would be keeping me up nights to treat his colic and indigestion. It wasn't fair to ruin a good horse that way and I wasn't going to give old Napoleon a chance to blame me for his ruination. Tony was a real fellow, he knew horses, he knew Napoleon—I'd make Tony a present of Napoleon and leave them both happy in the midst of the big dry.

My big boss didn't want me to go. He offered me a ten bucks' raise on the month, which would have been thirty large dollars on the quarterly pay, but I stood pat on going.

"You'll never be satisfied back there, Red," Williamson told me, "and when your feet get to itchin' come on back, there'll always be a place for you with my outfit." To show that there was no hard feeling, when I offered to buy a bay gelding I had recently broken he gave me a good cussin' and told me to pick my horse and take him as a gift.

Well, the wedding and the celebration went off as per schedule, Waterman wearing the feathers of the big chief and Ann her squaw clothes. Squire Quinn hadn't had a great deal of experience in roping couples like that and he had a worse time than the bride and groom, but he got through with it finally and when he ended up with "and may God have mercy on your souls" the boys lined up along the walk to the Chink's eatin' house where the dinner was waiting and as the bride and groom walked past there was an awful waste of perfectly good ammunition.

That was a day to remember, with everything in town free to the boys, but I don't remember much about it, the which may be accounted for because I was think-

ing that every minute brought me nearer the start for that trip to Kentucky.

We had set five o'clock as the get-away. About four I found Tony, who had ridden in on my bay gelding, and we went over to the corral. I took Tony's outfit off of the bay and put it on Napoleon with my own hands. Then I put my own outfit on the bay and then I put an arm around that old second cousin of a kangaroo, my Napoleon horse, and when I found I couldn't talk I decided to rush right over to Crasswall's and get some treatments for my throat.

I took about four treatments and went out the back way meaning to find some quiet place where I could count my money and see if I could think of any obligations I had overlooked. Well, I counted the money and, if I wasn't seeing double, the which I may have been, I had nearly seven hundred dollars.

At five o'clock we, meaning Ann, Waterman, I and a great concourse of citizens, as Rip Jaimson would say, gathered in front of Crasswall's. Waterman had made a little speech thanking the boys for the royal time they had shown him and his bride, and Ann Frazier Waterman had shaken hands with every horney-fisted son-of-a-gun in the crowd. Waterman and Ann had swung into their saddles and I was making out like I was tightening up on my saddle roll, when Alkali Jones called attention to a cloud of dust that was coming in from the west as if it was chasing payday.

Knowing that it must be some puncher who had heard the big news late and was trying to arrive in time to say good-by, we all waited and while we waited I slipped into Crasswall's to get another treatment for my throat. When I returned, the late guest had arrived and the gang crowded about him and everybody was trying to talk at once. I elbowed my way through the reception committee and before I knew it, I was standing face to face with that long, lean, bow-legged Rip Jaimson himself.

"Well, you red-headed old centipede!" he said.

"You bow-legged buzzard!" I said.

"How are you, Red?"

"How are you, Rip?"

"You rusty old lizard!" he said.

"You petrified skeleton!" I said.

"How are you, anyhow, Red?"

"How are you, Rip? Come on you old fossil, you're just in time to have a farewell drink with me!"

"Not so fast, you old sponge, I'm the Honorable Ridpath Jaimson, the newly appointed United States marshal for this district, and I've got to be careful how I appear in public, drinking with folks whose reputations—"

"What?" I exclaimed.

"I mean it! he said, "and what's more you are hereby and herewith appointed deputy to the aforementioned Honorable Ridpath Jaimson, to take office as soon as you have been sworn. Damn your ornery, sun-blistered hide, you have now been sworn in and here's your insignia of office."

With that he dug up a silver star and hooked it onto my shirt and the entire population of the town went locoed forthwith—excepting me. I didn't go because I had went some time previously and was already there.

The crowd closed in on Rip, and I edged out to where Waterman and Ann, from their horses, had been interested spectators.

"It's no use, Ann!" I said. "I meant to go, but I can't. This is my life out here. I'm sorry, but I just can't."

"I think I understand," she said, "and it's all right. Maybe, some time, you'll come. You are the only brother I have and we'll always be waiting to welcome you."

And before I knew what she was about she had swung down from her saddle, put

her arms about my neck and kissed me first on one cheek and then the other. I was so dumfounded I didn't even help her back into the saddle.

"I'm sorry," I heard Waterman say, his voice sounding like a faint echo. "There's a Kentucky home waiting for you any time you'll come. In the meantime, here's my share of the reward money and I want you to do something for me. Spend it for food and blankets for my tribe and tell them their big chief will not forget them. Good-by, and good luck to you all."

"Good luck, Red!"

I don't know what I said as they rode away on the Holbrook trail, but directly Rip Jaimson laid a hand on my shoulder and said:

"Isn't that your man Tony on your horse Napoleon?"

It was and I yelled at Tony in a voice that he would have heard even if he had been beyond the grave:

"Come here with that horse."

Tony came bringing his grin with him.

"What'll you take for that horse?" I asked.

Tony grinned and shrugged his shoulders. I dug into my pocket for what was left of that seven hundred dollars:

"Say, heathen, you get your outfit off of that old kangaroo as quick as you can because you've sold that horse and I'm the new owner. Here's your *dinero*." I handed him the roll.

Just ten minutes later Rip Jaimson and I were riding toward the Cottonwood and Napoleon was trying to convince me that it was his turn to ride.

THE END.



SERENADE

NE'ER a star unveils her light;
 Dark and cheerless is the night;
 Dark my longing soul till thou
 Lend thine ear unto my vow!
 On my fond love, pleading now,
 Smile, my lady!

Catherine Young Glen.



Gas

By PAUL SEVERANCE

"PARDON me a moment, some one's rapping."

Judge Crofton rose. His angular figure loomed large in silhouette against the stronger light beyond the archway. He hummed a fragment of an opera as he proceeded down the hall. On the steps he found a beggar.

"I'm an old man," came the faltering salutation.

"I can't be bothered," the jurist interposed. "Why the deuce don't you go to the city charities?"

The bleary eyes shot forth a feeble ray of scorn. "City charities!" He made the motion of a grunt. "Lot they'll be doin' for you." The speaker coughed. "I goes there yesterday. Man says he's busy, t' come back to-morrer. To-morrer! An' for three days, mister—"

"I know, I know—you hadn't had a bite to eat."

"I'm an old man. A dime or fifteen cents 'll help a little. I wants to get a

bed an' a bit of coffee. Bad nights for layin' out."

Judge Crofton thrust a hand into his trouser pocket.

"No, damned if I shall! It just encourages the practice. You fellows waste your lives, your opportunities, then whine for somebody else to carry the load. Besides—I don't believe your story. I know John Williams, of the charities. He's a hustler; conscientious, too. If he turned you down there's bound to be a reason. You won't work, you're a boozier—something."

"I'm an old man," came the vacant repetition. Judge Crofton partly closed the door. The beggar turned away with a sullen gesture of resentment. The jurist started, frowned, stood staring for a moment. "Come back here! Step inside. Take off your hat."

The man complied. He stood and blinked, then rubbed his faded, watering eyes.

The judge looked closely at the weather-

beaten features. He nodded slowly with his meditation. "Come. Follow me."

At the library door the duo halted. Judge Crofton entered. His attitude had changed.

"Dr. Blake," he began in a tone that bantered, "Nemesis is at hand to demand surrender. Three hours by the clock I have listened to your sentimental theories about the great down-trodden—the woes of the proletariat. I am about to cure you with your own prescription." With a wave of his hand the speaker indicated the shrinking figure in the doorway. "Exhibit Number One. We'll place him on the witness stand. Ten minutes and he'll turn State's evidence to crucify your splendid hobby without a qualm." He pointed to the leather chair before the fire. "Sit down."

The man obeyed, uncertain, half reluctant. The cushions gave beneath his fragile weight and he sat forward stiffly, fearful to relax. He dropped a battered hat upon the hearth.

The judge produced a well-filled wallet.

"My man," he began with a pompous flourish, "here's a ten-dollar bill. Ten dollars—see it! It's crisp, brand new, real money! And it's yours, all of it—no, no, not yet. On one condition. Don't lose your self-control." He laughed. "We'll place it here upon the table where we all can see."

"Now listen. I'm going to question you. So's my friend, the Rev. Dr. Blake. You must answer truthfully if you want the money. No lies! I'll know it if you lie to me. I can actually smell them—eh, doctor? You see, I'm a judge, so that's my business."

The small man winced. He glanced up furtively, but his bleary eyes watered and he wiped across them with his sleeve. "I'm an old man," he whimpered faintly. But the judge talked on.

"The money's yours if you speak the truth. Tell us you're a drunkard—if you are. Tell us you've stolen, gambled, beat your wife. Or tell us how you've struggled—it will appease my friend. The doctor's sympathetic. But, understand—no lies!"

The stranger sniffed. "You're goin' to have me pinched?"

"Not a bit of it. What you say will not incriminate you. You have my word."

"An' then I gets the money?"

"Do what I tell you for—well, say for half an hour. Then the money's yours. Is that a bargain?"

The beggar rubbed his eyes. "I know. You want to make a fool—"

"Is it a bargain, Dr. Blake?"

The rector shrugged and nodded.

"I'm an old man," came the feeble lamentation.

Judge Crofton laughed. "You see, the man must lie. It's in his marrow—one reason for his failure! He says he's old. Now, tell us just how old you are."

"How old? I'm—fifty-three."

The examiner laughed again and struck his chest. "Sound as a drum!" He bent forward briskly and placed his palms upon the carpet. "No stiffness there! Now, see that muscle. Not bad, not bad? And I—I'm fifty-seven!"

The beggar squirmed uneasily, but found no words. His gaze shuttled stealthily from his antagonist to the tempting bill. The rector interposed.

"I say, be fair. That's no criterion. This man is weather-beaten. Age can't be measured by mere years. Why, bless you, some of us may live a century in a day!"

"I grant you that. But wait. I'll match experiences with this fellow. My premise is that it's not the social system that's to blame. It's human nature. This man's poor metal—putty, no resiliency, no fire, no steel. I hold it's almost criminal to aid him. It isn't fair to free him of responsibility. It isn't fair to you. Now, look at me. I made my money. Yes, every cent of it. And knowingly I never wronged a man. But this—this gentleman and his kind would graze upon my hard-earned bounty. Graze, yes, they even curse me when I turn them down—you can hold that bill in your hand, old man, if you'll feel more easy!"

The beggar fidgeted in his chair. "I'll work," he began, "but this here is Sunday. I thought you wouldn't want—"

"You'll work? Not worth your keep," the judge rapped out. "Feeble and slow and fumbling, with your eyes half gone!"

But let's get down to business. Suppose you open up and tell your tale?"

The man was obviously confused.

"I had a mother," he began.

"Sob stuff. We all had—even Dr. Blake!"

The beggar sniffed and rubbed his eyes. "I never had no chanst."

"Crippled or invalid in your youth?" the rector wanted to know.

Resentment smoldered in the bleary eyes.

"Me crippled? Naw, I ain't no dud."

"Things just went wrong?"

The beggar nodded. "An' I never had no money."

"Ah, that's a handicap." The judge smiled apathetically. "But look at Rockefeller and Edison and Ford. Take President Harding, for example: 'Newsboy to President,' and proud of the achievement. Take Lincoln."

The rector shifted in his chair. "I'll have to ask you to be reasonable. We can't all be judges or financial giants. The big men shine only through the contrast. There must be masses, people to be governed, hands to till the soil. The one solution is to make conditions better for the working poor."

"I never had no education."

"Now, is that possible?" The judge knocked out his pipe. "Somehow, I feel the man has told the truth, eh, doctor?" He stroked his beard. "You'll only brand it as another of my theories, but do you know I can forgive a fellow who hasn't mastered Greek or French or higher mathematics, but how a man can live in his native land for more than half a century and not speak its language with at least acceptable accuracy—it seems unpardonable. It's mental torpor, that's what it is. He's too confounded lazy even to open up his ears!"

"Rubbish! Crofton, you're impossible. I've tried to respect your ideas, even if I can't agree with you. But I'm convinced that you're a crank. Actually, you are. You should have married and mellowed up a bit. English? A man talks as his companions do. This fellow would have been an outcast had he tried to speak as you or I. Look at England. Look at your own country—the North and the South. Look

at the patois of Europe. I'm sorry for you, really. I'd feel that I were most unfortunate were I a prisoner before your bar!"

"You'd find me fair enough. In fact, I often overdo the mercy stunt. But cheer up, doctor. You English are too stiff, too theoretical. Remember, we're just experimenting now."

"But why discourage the poor chap? He'll take a fortnight to recover. He'll earn his money! Here, I'll add another ten—and I'm a Scotchman!" The rector tossed a bill upon the table. "My compliments, friend." He settled deeper in his chair. "One feels some better—buying off one's conscience. Now, go ahead and vivisect."

"I'll drop it if it pains you. Besides, I'm confident there's nothing novel. I could sketch the yarn ahead of him—just see if I'm not substantially correct."

"You didn't go to school, grew up a loafer, working when you had to at this and that. You didn't have a steady income, but you married?"

"Married? Huh! Couple of times—three, but the last one never took."

"Where are your wives?"

The beggar scowled, the smoldering flame of his resentment piercing the thin crust of his restraint. But the crisp bills on the table caught his eye. "One of 'em's dead—I guess," he answered. "Second one"—his hands worked nervously—"she weren't no good nohow, and I never knowed what come of her."

Judge Crofton rose and towered above his victim. "No good?" He seemed struggling for restraint. "I suppose you were kind and cared for her with many a sacrifice!" He crossed to the window and gazed out upon the blackness of the court. There was a raw wind blowing overhead. He wheeled again to the beggar. "I wonder, seriously, if you ever did a real good turn; if you ever stuck to an ugly job and worked like the devil for the sake of making good and getting something better?"

But the beggar's eyes were dull with flagging interest and he brushed his sleeve across them. "I'm an old man," he complained, but the words seemed lifeless, as though the urge that prompted them had long since lost its force. He stirred uneasily, fretted

by the judge's steady gaze. "I reckon I done my part."

"Come, rouse yourself. Give us just one example."

"I—I don't remember now."

"I guess you don't." The jurist turned to his friend. "Dr. Blake—" He paused. "Oh, well, we all agree that suicide's a coward's exit. But when I look at this—this derelict, why, he's not even man enough for that! Look at him. He's cold in the winter. He's wet when it rains. No bed to sleep in. Hungry—always hungry. And the worst of it is there's no logical hope, no turn in the road ahead. Yet he clings to life—clings to it like the last leaf on a naked bough. He's crumpled and crisp and dried out so he almost rattles. But he wants to live—afraid to let go, that's it. That's cowardice. It's the same fear that has made his life a failure. I'm willing to wager—"

"Really, Judge Crofton, this is positively brutal. Hasn't the world been hard enough on this poor unfortunate without your thrusting in the blade of skepticism and actually turning it around in the wound? I'll admit the man hasn't put up much of a defense, but you're rushing to conclusions. You can't know how much he may have suffered. He may not care to tell."

The jurist waved aside the interruption. "Cowardice, simple cowardice," he repeated. "And I'm going to prove it to your entire satisfaction. This man hasn't a thing to live for, not a thing, but misery to face. We'll see if he has bowels enough—"

"You're not proposing—"

"Suicide!"

The rector sat up rigidly. Judge Crofton turned abruptly to the beggar.

"Look here, my man. You've made a mess of things. You've jumbled life until it isn't worth the living. There's twenty dollars. That's food and warmth for a week two weeks, three if you're saving. After that—what? Back to your miserable game of begging. Back to poverty and filth and insults. But look. That small door there at the end of the room leads to a private lavatory—a wash room, do you under-

stand? Inside, there is an instantaneous heater, perhaps you've seen them—gas. I'll show you how to work it. Five minutes—ten, and the trick will all be over. No more sorrow. No more pain!"

"Judge Crofton!" the minister was on his feet. "Great Heaven, what are you saying to this man!"

The judge was silent. The beggar blinked. He made as if to rise, but sank back limply. His dim eyes watered. "I—I'm an old man," he muttered.

"I insist this thing be stopped!" There was a chill determination in the rector's tone. "I thought it was a joke, a fool experiment. But if you think this funny—it's actually fiendish, criminal, do you hear! It's worse than that, aye gad, it's murder!"

"Murder?" Judge Crofton stretched his neck. He ran a finger around inside his collar. "You're too dramatic, Dr. Blake. You should have been an actor. The man won't do it, I tell you. He hasn't the nerve. We're all alone—even the servants are gone. Just you and I and—this. But he can't go over the top. When the zero hour comes he welsches. That's the trouble with his class. I'm giving him an easy chance, that's all. He's going in that little room—alone. He can think things over. Ten minutes, ten minutes by the clock—that isn't long. It will just complete the man's half hour. When he comes out—and he will come out—he can take his paltry twenty and go his way. But he'll know himself for what he is—a coward!"

"I'll have no hand in such maniacal proceedings." The rector crossed to the corner where his coat and stick and hat lay on a chair. "I'll bid you good night." He hesitated. "I feel that I am shirking an absolute responsibility. I should call an officer. I should take this man away by force."

"One minute, Dr. Blake. Sit down. You may be needed." Judge Crofton laughed. "You English, you're so droll, so sober." He turned again to the beggar. "Come now, my man," and he glanced at the clock. "Ten minutes, understand. I'm giving you a chance. If you've an ounce of manhood in that shriveled carcass you'll turn the little lever that I show you. If

you're a coward—and I believe you are—in ten minutes when I open that door you'll shamle out with your aches and pains and take your twenty dollars and be gone."

The jurist opened the lavatory door. It revealed a small room of white tile. A nickle-plated water heater stood beside a white enamel bowl.

"You see, it turns like this—toward you." The judge switched the lever on then quickly off again. "That's all you have to do to flood this little room with gas. Sit down and think it over. Breathe deep, don't strike a match and—pleasant dreams!"

"Judge Crofton!" The rector's voice came pleadingly now. "You may think that you are teaching this poor man a lesson. You may think—God, I don't know what you think!" His voice came sharper. "But I warn you, I warn you, Crofton. The strain will be too great. He may be the cur you say, he may not have the nerve to turn that lever, but if he doesn't he'll come out—he'll come out a raving maniac or a driveling fool, do you hear me? And if he is—if he is, I warn you—"

The door closed softly and Judge Crofton turned the key.

"Please don't disturb yourself." The jurist sauntered to the fireplace and deliberately refilled his pipe. His companion faced him rigidly from the middle of the room.

"Really, Dr. Blake, I couldn't tell you while the man was here. It would have spoiled the whole effect. You see—there's no gas on that line."

The rector started. He sank down limply in his chair. The judge went on:

"This house was built for a physician. This must have been his private office with that handy lavatory there. I never used it, so I ordered the gas cut off—oh, a year or more ago."

The minister smiled faintly. "But all the same it isn't fair to test a man like that. He can't be too strong mentally and he doesn't know there isn't any gas." The rector rose and paced the floor. "Right now he's fighting—fighting with that devilish temptation you spread before him! You don't know, Crofton; life isn't cherished

overmuch when a man has suffered—just so far."

"Fighting!" Judge Crofton clutched the word. "He isn't fighting. He's not that sort. That's just your sentimental fancy. He's sitting there, placidly wiping his weeping eyes and grinning up his sleeve that he's had the luck to find two easy marks. Fight? I guess not! That twenty dollars is in his eye. Twenty dollars to stay locked up ten minutes in a room with a dead gas heater. I'd do the same myself, for half!"

"I don't like it, Crofton." The rector paused in his pacing before the open fireplace and struck the deepening embers with his foot. "The trouble is, you're calloused—and that bears me out! There on your bench with that parade of criminals before you your heart has hardened. Your view of life has been distorted. Life, life, that's it, it's life that makes the man! My very point—my very point in the beginning! It's fashioned you, it's fashioned me, it's made the wreck of this poor beggar!"

"Wrong—wrong again! Just half informed and hurdling to conclusions! You're superficial, doctor, that's just the word; the trouble with you ministers. You never know real life. Lied to by humanity. Pampered, lionized by women. You drift about toying with empty symbols, dealing in theories, glittering unrealities. You think you know this life because you go into the homes, you inspire confidences, you minister to the poor. But it's all a stage, a farce. Now, I admire your earnestness, but your philosophy is almost childish—you'll pardon me, old friend! Kindness isn't a matter of giving, of making the roadway easy or of carrying the other fellow's load—not if he's able to drag it along. You only unfit him, you make him weaker. I've learned that in my years on the bench. It's part of me—yes, I concede that much to your theory. But still I hold you're jumping to conclusions. You see, I know this man."

"You mean you know his record?"

"That's it. I didn't recognize him when I first saw him on the steps. It was when I refused him money and he turned to go. There was something in that gesture,

something sullen, bitter, defiant. It was feeble enough, but a vicious picture. And it stirred a memory—that's one of my strong points, doctor, I never forget. Why, that must have been twelve—fifteen years ago.

"It was the case of a woman; one of the most pitiful I have had before my bar. It wasn't the novelty of the situation, but its brutal features. Not the big, blunt, rugged, out-of-doors brutality. It was worse than that. It was the brutality of a coward. You see, the woman—she was the second wife he spoke about—was in love with this contemptible runt of a man.

"Now, he isn't a sharker, nor a fox, not one of the sort that's clever enough to have the other fellow pull the chestnuts out of the fire. If he was, he wouldn't be in this condition. He's just low and dull and absolutely unscrupulous. He was handsome in those days, after a fashion that I've noticed even some mighty good women like. And he knew this woman loved him. That was enough. He had just sufficient craftiness to keep his vile affections dangling before her eyes as a boon for faithful service. But she couldn't make the money to satisfy his spending, so he threatened and bulldozed until she agreed to play a part in a robbery that would have put this cur on Easy Street if it had worked out as he hoped it would.

"There was another man in the game who had the nerve to do the dirty work. The woman was on the inside and was supposed to let him in. But as I say, things didn't go right. There was a shooting and a murder. It was just at a critical time for the woman—you understand, the child born dead. She couldn't make her get-away and when it came to trial this dog of a beggar framed up an alibi and threw the blame on the woman—I think it hurt her worse than the term she drew."

Judge Crofton crossed to the desk by the archway. He fingered through a file of papers and drew forth a yellowed, folded clipping. He spread it flat upon the table and for a silent moment the two men stood and gazed down upon the likeness of a sad-eyed girl.

"I wasn't in love with her," the judge

went on. "Don't think that, Dr. Blake. She was only a poor, unlettered, common girl—common as the world accepts it. But she had her parts. And she never welshed when that cur there turned upon her. She didn't say a word against him. But the whole sad story was in her eyes. She couldn't control that. And do you know, Blake, old friend—no, I wasn't in love with her, but I've sometimes thought I might have loved a woman who looked like that."

The jurist crossed to the open fire.

"I'm a sentimental old fool," he went on. "Some day I'll weaken and go to writing some woman these 'duddy-duddy' letters." He chuckled dryly. "But to go back to the trial I was telling you about. It was one of those cases that makes a monkey of the law. Technicalities and no positive proof. I had to instruct the jury to acquit the man. But I knew, and every member of that jury panel knew that he was guilty—guilty as sin!

"I called him up before me for a lecture—all I could do in a case like that. And when he turned away it was with that same sullen, curish gesture that I recognized at the door. I swore then that if I ever got him again before my court I'd stretch the limit. But I never did. I think he left the State."

The speaker paused. The rector shook his head and renewed his pacing.

"Confound it, Crofton, don't you smell gas?"

The jurist smiled. "Impossible! Imagination!" He glanced at the clock. "One minute more and we'll give the man his liberty. I'm not convinced that we've even got him worried—but I tell you now, I hope he earns that twenty!"

The minister was persistent. "But the gas. You say you ordered it cut off—you only ordered it. Do you know, Judge Crofton, do you know positively that there is no gas on that line? Do you know that absolutely?"

The big man meditated.

"Now, come to think of it, I can't say that I ever made the test. I never tried it out myself, I mean. But I'm reasonably sure—"

"You're reasonably sure!" The rector

strode to the window, then wheeled upon the judge. "Suppose there is gas there! Suppose they failed to carry out your order! What would you say, what would you say, Judge Crofton, if an accused man stood before your bar, an accused man who had done as you have done to-night, and who said that he was reasonably sure—that he thought the gas was off?"

The jurist rose. His brow was fretted. "I'd say—I'd say he was a fool, I guess. Oh, well, I'll release the man if you need the comfort. But mark my word, he'll shamle out and ask us for his money!"

There was a rapping on the lavatory door. The two men started; stood staring questioningly into each other's eyes. The knocking was repeated, more vigorous than before. The doctor spoke:

"Quick! Quick! The key! Unlock the door! There may be gas! He may have turned it on! He may not know—he may—"

But the startled jurist had regained his easy poise. He smiled sardonically as he passed the key to his anxious friend, then turned deliberately and relit his pipe.

When the door was opened a tottering figure leaned against the casement. But the eyes, no longer dim, burned sullenly. A trembling hand was lifted and pointed to the judge.

"You—you—" the beggar stammered. "You with your oily lawyer's tongue! I ain't no good, I ain't? I'm a houn' dog, am I? I'm here to tell you I'll take my chances with the likes of you!"

"My man—my man—" the rector interposed to calm the troubled waters.

"I ain't a-needin' none of your advice!" The man brushed off the friendly hand. He riveted his eyes upon the judge.

"I've made a mess of things. I know that now. 'Twas you what made me see it. An' I goes in that room there an' I thinks it over. Ten minutes!" He put his hand to his throat. "Seemed like it was an hour! But I decides you're right. I decides you're right, an' I turns that lever—I got guts, I have—I turns that lever! But you was playin' a sure game—I never had no chanst. They ain't no gas! They ain't no gas, I say." The man's voice died out

in a husky sobbing. "I would 'ave done it. I would 'ave had it over—over. But they ain't no gas—they ain't no gas!"

There was a painful silence, then the judge strode to the lavatory door and flung it open.

"Aye, gad, he did! He turned it on—look, doctor! You know, I'm positive I've done this man a kindness. It takes a shock, a jolt, to bring some people to an understanding of things as they really are—to make them see themselves, their torpid degradation."

The minister frowned. "You've made a brutal blunder, Crofton. You, with your man made laws, would sit in judgment; with your limited scope, your earth-bound understanding. Granting that your aim was honorable, you've made an error that so many persons make. You can't take a man bodily, uproot him and transplant him from one plane of life to another. You can't do it and make him thrive. He'll wither and die. It's a gradual growth, an evolutionary process. It's like taking a frail, undernourished plant from the darkness of a cellar. It might be doing its own good down there in its own limited way. But it can't stand the glare of the sunlight. It will get its growth in the course of a natural upward progress. You can only help to clear the obstacles from its path.

"But to force your standards upon this man can only interrupt his orderly progression. You render him unfit. He's got to go back and take up the loose ends of life where he left them. Not in your time, nor in my time, but in God's own time he will be able to walk alone. I only hope you have not completely shattered what little unity and self assurance this poor life has gained. Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. May God forgive and may this poor creature find it in his heart—"

For the first time they noticed that the man had crumpled on the edge of a huge armchair before the fireplace.

"Come, come, my man—brace up. We have all made our mistakes. Judge Crofton, here, was only trying to put you on your feet, to wake you up, to make you understand. Come, pull yourself together. Let me help—"

"I ain't a-wantin' help from such as you!" The man shook himself free. "That's all you want—you preachers—to make a fellow feel beholden, to get him obligated. I knows your sort." He stood erect. "I'll cheat you both, I will! I know I've made a mess of things, but I ain't too old—I ain't too old, do yer hear? An' I'm goin' to start over. I'm goin'—I'm goin' to—" He turned and tottered feebly down the hall.

"Here, here, my man—you're forgetting something—your twenty dollars!" It was the judge who called.

"T' hell with yer twenty!" and the man was gone.

On the following day Judge Crofton was detained in court. It was dark when he left his office, but it was his custom to walk to and from his home for the air and exercise. He set out in the face of a raw, relentless wind that whisked sharp, biting gusts of snow into his face as he bent his head and

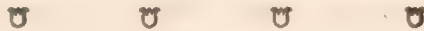
buttoned up his great fur collar that reached to his eyes.

He crossed the busy thoroughfare, then wheeled abruptly into a narrow, dimly lighted street. It was not his usual route, but the way was shorter. He had progressed no more than fifteen paces when a huddled figure shuffled out from the shelter of a doorway. The jurist circled to avoid colliding with it.

"I'm an old man, mister," came the wistful salutation. "A dime or fifteen cents 'll help a little. Bad nights for layin' out!"

The big man started as though a ghost had spoken. But as he raised his head a gust of wind whipped around the corner and made him almost lose his hat.

"Here, here, my man." He pressed a quarter in the outstretched hand. He hurried on, but a frail voice seemed to follow. Judge Crofton was never certain whether it was a curse of recognition, half uttered gratitude, or a mumbled, broken fragment of a prayer.



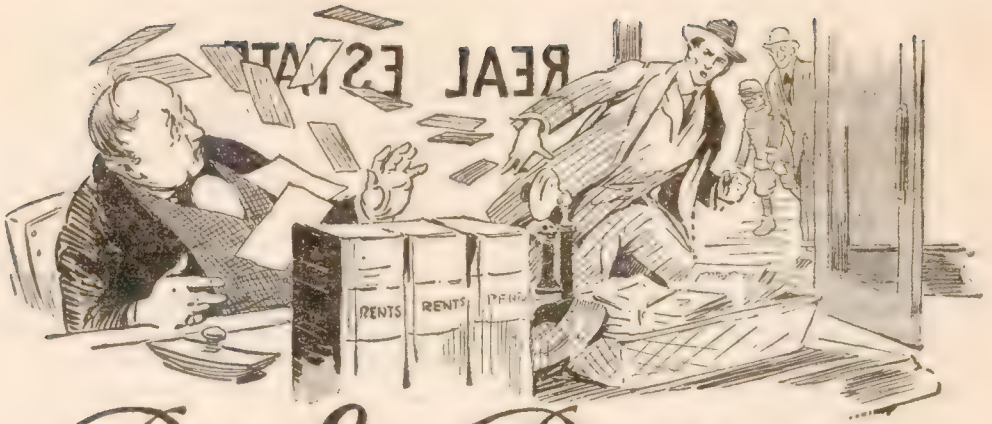
RETROSPECT

BY the tall bridge that spans the river,
 In the flooding sheen of an argent moon,
 Where the lush long grasses stirred aquiver
 'Neath the languorous breath of slumbering June,
 There you passed like a dryad, drifting
 In vistas where woods and waters woo
 The soul of a summer night, uplifting
 The glory of beauty and love—and you.

Treading the moss, as a fairy lightly
 Trips through the moonlight from beam to beam,
 You passed from view, while there echoed brightly
 Your laughter, wistful with love's warm dream:
 So you passed—in the flower strewn weather
 Under the elm where long we kissed
 But yesterday, vowing we'd share together
 Life in love's fields of amethyst.

Yes, you passed on;—nor knew this knell—O!—
 Slinking in shadows, I watched you two:—
*And I wish I could wallop the other fellow
 Who went out walking last night with you!*

Olin Lyman.



Parlor, Bedroom and Graft

By THOMAS THURSDAY

RIGHT now I ain't sure which one I should damage with a bevy of assorted bricks—Joe Robinson, or our genial landlord, Mr. Uriah Dalton. Perhaps you are aware that I am a married man—you are if you live within hearing distance of the flat. Anyway, me and Lulu, who is my charming playmate in the game of go-to-the-matrimony, get wed and settle down to the business of sparring through life, and everything is pretty O. K. for the time being, seeing that one of us has been born lucky enough to have a sense of humor. Then things take a turn for the worse, as they are wont to in the lives of newly harried couples, and although Lulu is a much better looker than any dame that even Professor Ziegfeld ever presented for the approval of the bald-domed customers, why, I am obliged to forget that interesting fact when I discover that she has a nerve-wrecking brother who not only seems to be hint proof but the king of food consumers as well.

What I wish to impute—if you'll pardon

the French, since I don't know what it means myself—is that this Joe Robinson, who never done any real work in his life, and to prove it he is right now connected with the Sherlock Detective Agency—anyway, what I was trying to say is that this wimp brother always manages to call at our love nest when we are in the midst of having one of Lulu's unsurpassed dinners. We never have much on the bill of fare on Wednesdays and Fridays, because by them days both McCohen, the grocer, and O'Horowitz, the butcher, seem to get wise to my line of conversation, and shut down on the credit. But what I was about to say is that on them two days this Joseph is as far out of sight as Asia Minor is to Times Square; but when we have real food on the installment plan table, why, this nerve-wrecking toad is right on the job with an appetite that would make an elephant think his trunk was too short or something.

Well, on this fatal day, as Mary J. Holmes might remark, I sit down to the table with the idea that I am about to eat

in peace and quietness, all of which is sweet melodies to me, as I note that Lulu has cooked up a meal that would have made even the complete set of Pharaohs smack their lips for a third helping. Then the bell buzzes and my appetite flies out the window like a scared canary.

"Don't answer it," I suggest. "It will be a positive novelty for us to bill and Coué without any company. Besides, I ain't running any restaurant for the benefit of relatives, and anyway, your brother eats soup like some guy playing the flute."

Lulu raises her pretty eyebrows a few inches above sea level, gives me a look that would have even chased the French out of the Ruhr, and remarks, "William," she says, "any time my dear brother isn't welcome at the home of his own sister, then I think it is time that we *both* stayed out. What's more, he's a gentleman that you might well emulate."

"Open the door," I says. And while she walks down the hall I grab a few chunks of the white of the chicken and conceal them in my pocket. Otherwise I don't get any. Then the door opens, and I find that it ain't Joseph, but a sucker that I hate just a little more. It was our sentimental rent grabber, Mr. Uriah Dalton, and I guess right away that he has smelt the chicken and the what not.

"Ah, my dear Mrs. Pinkney," he says, "how do you do? I'm sorry to intrude at such an inopportune time, but I have a matter of importance to—"

"Oh, come right in, Mr. Dalton," invites the missus, leading the ape down the hall into the kitchen. "We were expecting my brother Joseph for luncheon, but I am afraid that something has happened to him. Won't you join us?"

"Sure—sit down!" I says. "We got plenty of everything, and I will be sore as hell if you don't grab your share. It's a shame to have this good stuff go to waste. Anyway, we get all our food for less than nothing and—"

"William!" snaps the missus. "You forget yourself, don't you? Remember, please, that this is Mr. Dalton, not one of your poolroom cronies, that you are talking to. Er—*do* join us, Mr. Dalton."

"Yeah, sit right here beside me before brother Joseph comes in and walks away with everything but the plates and forks. Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha!" echoes the delightful Mr. Dalton. "You're the same old Mr. Pinkney, I see. How's every little thing in the pocketbook business?"

"Punk!" I says. "I'm gonna study up how to be a landlord. When it comes to having a cinch, you guys are the pigs' knuckles."

"Do you care for the white meat, Mr. Dalton?" Lulu breaks in, holding the platter over his head.

I hope it slips.

"Really, my dear Mrs. Pinkney, it don't make any difference, but—er—since you have the white handy, why, I'll be satisfied with that."

"Give Mr. Dalton both breasts," I suggest. "Sorry we ain't got any champagne, kid—but you know how it is nowadays."

"Oh, that's all right, Mr. Pinkney," replies the gorilla. "We can't have everything, you know. Ha, ha!"

"Not on my income, you can't," I slam back. "Believe me—"

"William!" gloops the dear wife. "What is the matter with you to-day? I've never heard you talk so rudely before. Do behave yourself!"

"There goes the bell," I break in with a sinking heart. I figure that the worst is yet to come, and he does.

"Oh, goody," enthuses Lulu. "It must be brother Joseph. He's just in time."

She said a mouthful, mates. Any time that beezark ain't on time when we have some real eats, then it's a cinch that he's either pinned under a truck or has dropped down a manhole.

"Hello, folks!" greets Joseph as he dashes in. "Gosh, I smell something good! Woof!"

"That's all you get this time—a smell," I remark. "We got another customer with us to-day. You're out of luck."

"William, *please* keep quiet, won't you?" begs Lulu. "You know very well that we always have plenty for everybody. Sit down next to William, Joseph. There!"

The big flatfoot planks himself on my

right side, and I realize that my chances for anything to nibble at are now what they call negligible. For one thing, I can't compete with his reach, which same is a shade longer than a chimpanzee's; and for another, each time I get a look at his kisser I get deathly dizzy.

"I know that Joseph likes the white meat," says Lulu, piling up the wimp's plate till it flows over on the tablecloth.

"Are you all finished, Bill?" he says to me, jamming his trap full of delicious food.

"Finished—nothing!" I snort. "I ain't even had a napkin." Then I direct my attention to Mr. Dalton and note that he is having a devil of a time trying to do away with forty cents' worth of *hors d'œuvres* and Bronx anchovies, all at a single swaller.

"Let Joseph and Mr. Dalton dive right in," I says. "Don't mind me—I'll be the referee. If you can't get away with the silverware, why, just pass it over this way. Not that I'm a wee bit hungry, understand."

At that bright remark Lulu gives me a North Pole glare, opens up the ice box, and hauls out some hash that even the cat passed up six days ago, and proceeds to set it before my amazed eyes.

"William is simply crazy about hash," she announces to one and all, giving me a sly kick in the shins at the same time. "Once in a while he eats chicken, but his appetite is very poor lately. I think I will have to get him a tonic."

"Yeah—I noticed that about Bill," grunts Joseph, as he assassinates the balance of the celery. "Too bad, ain't it?"

Well, about an hour later, both Joseph and Mr. Uriah Dalton manage to get over-stuffed with pure food and grow a little groggy, all of which gives me a shot at the table linen, about the only thing they have overlooked.

Then the landlord rises and remarks that he thinks he will have to be going, saying that it is the first time he has missed dinner at home for some time, and that if he don't get back right away, why, his missus will be kind of peeved.

As he goes he slips an envelope into Lulu's hand, and I think it is a tip or at least a rebate on the rent, and he says it is

a little note for her. It sure was! However, before he leaves, he notices the cigars in my vest pocket, helps himself to the best one, and then blows out.

"What did he slip you—a love letter?" I want to know.

Lulu removes a hairpin out of her wealth of golden wavelets and slits open the envelope with great expectations. She takes one look and becomes white in the face, notwithstanding the fact that she uses the best French rouge that the market affords.

"The idea!" she shrieks. "The nerve of some people! The—the—brute!" And the letter drops to the floor, and Joseph scoops it up, takes a good look, and then begins to fume.

"It's an outrage, sister!" he says. "What I call a darn shame!"

Well, by this time it dawns upon my well oiled mind that there might be something wrong, not that it was any of my business, seeing that I'm only the husband and do nothing more than pay the bills, *et cetera*.

"If it's all the same to you," I butts in, "I wouldst like to read the news." Joseph tosses over the letter, it lands in a soup plate, I wipe it off, and then have a slant. Hot puppy!

I have one peek and then choke with assorted rage.

Here—have a look for yourself:

DEAR MRS. PINKNEY:

Owing to increased taxation and the repairing which will begin on the house in the near future, I regret to inform you that, beginning the first of the month, your rental will be increased ten dollars.

Very sincerely,

URIAH DALTON.

Of course, I go up in the air, sail around the Milky Way, after which my temper comes back to earth, and I let one and all know that I am the well known brand of peeved husband.

"What!" I starts off—and that's always a safe word to start off with; it don't mean a damn thing! "What!" I yell. "Where does that pickle-faced Shylock get off to raise *anything*, hey? Believe me, I ain't paying nobody seventy dollars a month for a boob trap like this! Why, figure out how many extry pocketbooks I gotta sell to the trade to grab off that ten bucks, and

for what? For a four room flat that ain't even big enough for a pair of innocent chipmunks to play tag in. A ten-buck raise, hey? Not on his life! I'll dash out right now and grab a flat for just half what we're slipping that burglar now. Pack up our junk, Lulu, and we'll get ready to move right away. I ain't no dumb-bell, I ain't."

"William," interrupts the missus, "don't be silly! Pray, where can we move, may I ask? Flats do not grow on trees nowadays."

"If they did," I says, "some guy would get an option on all the branches and dispossess all the sparrows. Anyway, I'm glad that that sucker shows his hand. I been sick of this bird cage for a long time. Don't worry, Lulu, I'll dash out right now and dig you up a palace, and for less than we are slipping that stonehead. Leave it to me!"

I grab my skimmer, overcoat, and by dumb luck I manage to get hold of one of Joseph's forty-for-a-dime cigarettes while he has his knob turned, then I slam the door behind me. I'm real mad, and when I get mad, I am peeved, I'll inform the bow-legged world. There ain't nobody putting anything over on me!

First, I buy a morning paper and read all the advertisements for flats to let, all of which don't take me more than a second, because there ain't none. Then I get mad all over, and walk around to the steal estate office of Mr. Uriah Dalton and find him sitting neat and comfortable in a big, fat easy chair reading the income tax blank, which he is no doubt trying to figure out how to beat, or at least, hold out something on the government for luck and his own benefit.

"Oh, it's Mr. Pinkney!" he says, soon as he gets one pike at my cheerful map. "Er—have a seat."

"Never mind the apple sauce, you ungrateful stiff!" I slam at 'im. "I am in no condition to sit in any chair and converse like a true gentleman should—specially with a fathead like you have turned out to be. The missus goes and gives you a feed that would of made the King of Sheiks bow down and kiss her big toe, and what do you do, eh? Why, you slant-faced ape, you, you slip her a note raising the rent, *that's*

what you do! For two cents I'd knock you all over this—"

"Sir!" retorts Mr. Dalton. "Can it be possible that this man is talking to me?"

"It sure is!" I toss back. "Anyway, who the devil are you? Besides, I have merely dropped in to give you notice that you can have your punk flat—I ain't paying no seventy a month for a dog kennel!"

"My dear Mr. Pinkney," he says, "have you been drinking?"

"What d'yer mean—drinking? By the time a guy gets through paying out his hard-earned dough to you Shylocks, he ain't got enough left to treat himself to a dose of synthetic prune juice."

"I don't care to converse with a rough-neck," he snaps, getting red in his pan.

Now I'm mad! First, I get the idea that to murder this baby would be the right thing in the right place, but then I happen to think that, since I am not a woman, I won't be able to get away with it, what with the genial ways them jurymen seem to have. So I satisfy my temper by picking up ten dollars' worth of his business blotters and tossing them all over the office. Then I give him a few hard looks and beat it. All of which settled that.

Well, I spend the next six hours looking for a flat that I can beg, borrow or steal for a sum somewhat less than a king's ransom with the wealth of Tut-ankh-Amen tossed in for a deposit on the first month. No can do! I first get into a four-stall boob trap that the janitor breaks down and confesses was formerly a stable, until the landlord woke up, and put a few partitions. I inform the gent that me and my family ain't horses, although I may personally look like the same.

Then I try another joint that, before the war knocked everything cockeyed, no doubt rented for a dime a month, with golden-haired maid service tossed in to keep you happy and contented. The trap is on the third floor of a house—or maybe it was a barn—anyway, while I follow the janitor up the stairs I am deathly afraid that they will bust or fall apart or the like. When I reach the second floor, I take a few sniffs of the garlic and sauerkraut that the other inmates were cooking up for the bene-

fit of the family doctor, and so I ask my guide what sort of people lived in the joint, since I am very particular, not caring to consort with a bunch of dagoes and hunkies or any other brand of hundred per cent Americans.

He says that the folks in the place are all nice, refined ladies and gents, and to prove it there ain't been a patrol wagon or ambulance around the front of the house for more'n a month. I dash down the stairs and continue the search, not caring to have my charming Lulu parked in such a place while I go out all day and spar a living from this best of all possible punk worlds. However, I am determined to beat Mr. Uriah Dalton if it is the last thing I do in my amazing career, not that you know the half of it, but any time a mere landlord gets ahead of *me*—well, you get my feeling, don't you? In fact, I intend to beat out that simp rent collector if I have to sleep in Mr. Central's park in a pup tent.

Well, I get dizzy all of a sudden and find myself in the subway—a guy must be dizzy before he gets in the subway—and I take a strap until we land in the Bronx sector. I figure that, since the Bronx is so far away, the rents up there should ought to be cheaper than two kronen per week. Are they? Hell, no!

I see a nice little golden sign outside of a nifty looking camp and I go inside and wake up the janitor. He blinks his eyes, stretches like it was the seventh inning at the Polo Grounds, then concludes by yawning in my face.

"I'm looking for a reasonable flat," I says, soon as he gets half awake. "Show me something and make it snappy—I'm a little peeved."

"Say, where d'yer get the idea that there is anything to let in a swell joint like *this*, huh?" he demands.

I call his attention to the fact that I have noted his sign outside and although I may be a little cockeyed I know what I see when I see it.

"Oh, that," he yawns. "You mustn't mind *that*. I meant to borrey a stepladder to take 'at sign down a month ago, but I ain't had the chance." Then the sucker walks away and leaves me flat.

I give up and blow back to Lulu with the good news. I figure that I am due for a terrible bawling out when she hears what I have done to Mr. Uriah Dalton, and when I tell her that I have also failed to find a new love nest—well, sweet pickles, that's all I gotta say! A guy don't have to go to Holland to be in Dutch, does he? He don't.

"Deary," I begins—I always start with that stuff when I observe a queer look on her otherwise pretty face. "Deary," I says, "I think we are just now out of all kinds of luck. There ain't a flat to let in the entire United States—I been all round, and I know! In fact, deary, I have just this minute quit searching, neglecting my pocket-book trade and everything. Guess we'll have to camp here for another month; huh, sweetie?" I always switch between "deary" and "sweetie" when I am in doubt about the wife's mood. Sometimes I get away with it—and sometimes I don't. Please note:

"Idiot!" was her opening bouquet. "How dare you go around to Mr. Dalton's office and scatter his blotters over his floor? Not only that, but you deliberately insulted the man needlessly. Haven't you any tact at all? Oh, to think that I married a man like you when I might have married a man with *real* brains!"

"But, petty"—I always bring in "petty" as a last resort—"but, petty," I says, "I only done what I did to protect you and our—er—honor. Never mind, we'll get the best of that buzzard yet!"

"You—you—" Then she chokes and turns on the tear falls. Being a wise owl, I have learned from experience that when a wife cries the best thing for a husband to do is to keep his pan shut.

Then the bell rings and she mops her face, takes a quick slant in the mirror to see whether she has ruined all the expensive landscape work that she has performed on her skin you love to touch, and then goes to the door.

It was dear brother Joseph—I can tell by the racket alone.

"Everything's all right, sister," I hear the chipmunk say. "The lease is all fixed up, and all you gotta do is to have William

write out a check for the first month and then you can move into your new flat. Take it from me, it's a cinch to find apartments when you have brains!"

Well, of course I am tickled at the news that that six-day sock-wearer has gone out and found an apartment when I couldn't even find a garage.

"How much did you have to bribe the janitor," I asks, "to get the new joint?"

"What d'yer mean—bribe the janitor?" he retorts. "A guy with intelligence don't have to bribe *nobody*. Believe me, you're a terrible three-alarm joke!"

"You—you ungrateful thing!" snaps the missus. "That's a fine way to thank dear brother Joseph for taking his time and trouble to find us a new apartment."

Oh, well, Happy New Year, what? But, anyway, I am tickled simple to think that we have got a new joint, even though brother Joe has got it for us. I have beat out Uriah Dalton, ain't I? So I decide to kid Joseph along.

"Have a cigar, Joseph," I begin. "I got to admit that you done nobly. Er—how much do we pay for the new camp?"

"Seventy dollars," he says without a trace of a grin.

"Seventy dollars!" I yells, springing from the chair. "*Bon soir*—what did you lease, Buckingham's Palace or the Grand Central Station? I ain't paying seventy dollars for *anything*!"

"William!" swoops the wife. "In the name of common sense, will you *please* act like a gentleman? Come—start to pack up the furniture, and maybe Joseph will help you. But, wait a minute—you better write out a check for the first month's rent and Joseph can take it to the superintendent."

"All right, deary," I says, bringing out my puny check book. "Er—what's the name of the new bandit—landlord?"

"Joseph will tell you," says Lulu, "he has the lease in his pocket."

Joseph dashes into his coat pocket and yanks out a bunch of paper and begins to read it. A second later, his face gets as red as the burning of Rome, and he blinks his eyes like some one had just socked him on the bean with a ton of bricks.

"A-hum!" he squeaks. "That's funny, Lulu. Er—"

I grab the paper out of his hand and—hot poodle!—what do you know?

At the end of the sheet it says—*Uriah Dalton, Owner, Party of the Second Part.*

Soon as I revive I direct my attention to dear brother Joseph.

"Well, brilliant," I snorts, "what d'yer think of the *new* landlord, huh?"

"How should I know?" he sends back. "I did business with the superintendent. Er—guess that guy Dalton must own the whole town. Anyway, what's the difference, hey?"

His head is just that shape!

THEY WAIT FOR YOU

I DO not care for you—
We have quarreled so.
But my small pulses
Do not know!

I do not wait for you.
Slain love's asleep.
But my small pulses
Start and leap.

Though I have ordered them
What they must do,
At every step, they call still:
"Is it you?"

Mary Carolyn Davies.



Pretties

By **ROLAND KREBS**

HEAD and shoulders above the train's other passengers, elegant George Carew elbowed his way through the railroad station, looking for the faithful wife who had waited patiently while he served two years for having recklessly strolled through a house not his own.

Carew was big, handsome, dapper and bland. He had a way with him. It was said of him that he never yet had come home from the State penitentiary wearing that "mule's ear" so kindly furnished outgoing wastrels by the authorities. Always in made to order clothing, he appeared to have been poured into it. That's why the "elegant" before George.

His quick eyes surveyed the woman who walked before him with two traveling bags to hinder her. From her wrist dangled an expensive vanity case.

"Agnes will like that," elegant George said to himself, and deftly took it unseen. The business of a burglar, you see, is to

steal when Opportunity says: "Here's your chance, bo."

His wife was waiting, with a smile on her face. She melted into his arms and devoured his kiss.

"Back again," she breathed softly. "And to stay this time."

Carew grinned.

"Yes, to stay. They won't catch me napping again."

"No, you bet they won't catch you napping."

"Ho, ho! Are you going to be my little lookout while I gather up knickknacks of a night?" asked Elegant George in good humor.

There was nothing but seriousness in Agnes's eyes when she held him by each shoulder.

"No, George," she said firmly, "I'm not going to be your lookout, because you aren't going to need a lookout. You're going to be honest from now on."

His face fell. Carew never had given sober thought to getting "out of line." He looked on burglary as a profession as exalted in its way as surgery and the interpretation of the Greek dramas.

"Come out of it, kid; an old ash barrel like me couldn't do anything honest. Let's hop into a cab and clatter home."

"No, let's take a street car."

"I've got money, and I'll soon have plenty more. Come on."

Elegant George saw that she was obdurate.

"Then save what you have," Agnes said, "because we're going to need it. We're going home on a street car."

She took his arm, and they left the station. The town's best burglar was somewhat puzzled by these remarkable manifestations of righteousness on his little ball-and-chain's part.

It seemed to him that a gentleman just finishing a bit for larceny from a dwelling house might at least expect his faithful helpmate to have his outsider and jimmy polished up and a new battery in his flash-lamp, so he could get to work. And here she was talking about his being honest. He tried another tack.

"Look what I've got for you, sweetest."

Agnes looked the stolen vanity case up and down and inside. It contained a ten dollar bill, a powder puff, a lip stick, and a little gold key.

"George, you glaucmed that off some woman."

"What of it, honey? The prettiest stuff you ever wore I snibbed."

"Well, I've just quit wearing that kind of stuff, that's all."

Disdainfully, Agnes tossed the golden loot into a handy waste can and dragged her startled husband toward a car that took them home.

II.

AFTER Elegant George had massacred her homecoming supper of chicken, dumplings and turnovers, and had compared its virtues to the shortcomings of prison fare, he snuffed deeply of a cigarette and asked: "Say, dear girl, what's the idea about all this 'honesty is the best policy' racket?"

Agnes left her chair, sat her slight self on his knee, kissed him, and explained quite simply:

"I've just decided that it doesn't pay to be a gun, honey."

"But it always paid me pretty well," Carew protested.

"Maybe so, when you weren't in stir. But if you think it's frolic to mope here patiently while your man whittles rocks down to fit the pavements you have eight more guesses coming."

"But, deary, I can't do any honest work. I never even tried."

"That's just it. You've never even tried. But you're going to try now. I'm going to insist, because I feel that I've been largely responsible for your having been so enthusiastic about burglary."

Carew leaned back and looked at her in surprise.

"You've been responsible? How do you dope that?"

"Well, by my extravagance and always wanting pretty things to wear and to look at. I even made you doll yourself up all the time. Somehow it made you look less like a burglar, George, to be wearing custom made clothes."

Elegant George could find no answer. What she said was true, every word. Nothing pleased Agnes so much on Monday as a pair of blue pendent earrings set with platinum. Nothing pleased her so much on Friday as another pair of jade cubes hung in silver.

Silks, scarves, furs, feathers, ivory, gold and silver were a few of the foods she fed on. To give her all the things she had wanted and to stay honest, too, Elegant George would have had to be president of an oil company.

Never once had Carew pried open a window or crawled through a transom that he had not picked up some little trinket here or there to please the wife who so enjoyed dressing herself and her home. The smallest he ever had brought her was a gold hairpin, the most cumbersome a piano lamp.

She had enjoyed it all immensely, because it is not every woman who has these things. Some of the poor dears go to jail

for picking what strikes their fancy off counters; others for having it charged to perfect strangers' accounts. How splendid that she had a husband who went to the trouble for her.

But after Elegant George had gone three times to the pen in the eleven years they had been married it began to dawn on her that the wish for pretty things often means hardship. The first jolt had been mild. Carew was back at his racket in nine months after "good behavior." The second time he had been paroled after fourteen months. But this third stretch had been two years—seven hundred and thirty-one days (one was a leap year). Agnes was afraid that the day might come when escape would compel George to blow off a policeman. Then, if he had a yellow label pasted on him, she could wear only pretty things that came in black.

"No, sir," Agnes insisted. "You're through lifting latches and working the shorts, George. I admit that I like clothes and junk, but I'd rather wear rags and have you safely at home. What's that crack in the play about 'Rags are royal raiment when worn for pity's sake'? You know the words. I'll play the music."

"What sort of honest work do you expect me to do?" asked Carew, surrendering.

"I've got a job all picked out for you."

"What?"

"The ice man told me this morning he is quitting at the end of the week. I fixed it up for you to take his place."

"Me an ice man? Great tripe! What a downfall!"

"Aren't you glad?"

"Oh, yes, of course, honey—I'm tickled to death. I was a burglar because I wanted to make you happy. I'd be a floor walker and wear a rose in my hair if it would make you glad. Monday morning, just as sure as I'm six feet two, I'll begin giving the housewives forty-five pounds when they ask for fifty."

So that was settled.

III.

IN six weeks Elegant George had found that it was not half as bad as he had pic-

tured it. He whipped two of his old cronies who derided him for treading the straight and uphill path. He was shorn of a lot of his elegance, but happy because it pleased Agnes. There was a single thorn to torture him. He knew how it hurt her not to have all the little trinkets that once had come so easy. Yet, if she insisted, he'd keep his hands out of other people's bureau drawers.

"Deary, let's step out and soak up some education at a movie," he suggested one evening.

"No," Agnes replied, opening her purse and looking into it. "We're a little shy on cash this week, and they want fifty-five cents a throw down at the Rialto now. But I'll tell you what we can do. We'll take a little walk up and down the stem and do some window shopping."

"Right."

Arm in arm they walked up and down Thirty-First Street, the most brightly lighted and thickly populated at night in their neighborhood. Before many shop windows they paused that Agnes might admire the wares displayed there.

They came to Blumberg's—a gem store of better than average standing.

"Gee—look at the nifty locket!" exclaimed Elegant George's good influence.

"Which one?"

"In the third row there—the silver one. I wish—"

"What were you going to say?"

"Oh, nothing. Come along."

Stupidly, Carew walked by her side. He heard little of the gay chatter she offered him, although he said "Yes" often and laughed each time she did. He was thinking.

IV.

STEALTHILY, Elegant George fitted the point of his ice tongs under the sash that faced the alley from Blumberg's jewelry store. Necessity at the last moment had had to prove herself the mother of invention, when he couldn't find his faithful jimmy. Evidently, Agnes had thrown it away or hidden it. He meant to ask her about it, because he felt a fatherly relationship toward that pet tool of his. For

the time being the ice tongs did fairly well as a substitute.

The sash up, Carew wriggled through the opening and felt his way cautiously. His cunning, after all, had not deserted him. He was quite at home, but always with one ear and a spare eye busy.

From Mr. Blumberg's stock he selected such watches, pins and gewgaws as appealed to him, carefully putting them in a denim bag that he carried for the purpose. He was too smart to stuff his pockets with them. He had been caught in a jam once that way, and spent nine months regretting that he couldn't empty the pockets fast enough of the telltale evidence.

Then came the hardest part of all. Elegant George stole to the front of the store and opened the show case cabinet. He must poke his hand in fast and draw it out faster, lest a passer-by see. Like a cat after yarn, he scooped up the little silver locket and dropped it into his bag. His night's work was done.

Elegant George hastened quietly to the alley window. He thrust one leg through, clutching fast to his bag.

"Drop that!"

In the darkness a gruff voice shouted almost in his ear.

Carew dropped the bag in a jiffy, and in another had cleared the window and vaulted the fence. Down the alley he sped on two frightened feet that scarcely touched the ground.

A glance over his shoulder showed that he was not being pursued. Elegant George

hadn't known that Blumberg kept a night watchman on the premises.

A narrow squeak.

He caught an owl car, luckily, and rode across town, then doubled back for appearances's sake. With a pounding heart he crept into his flat and sighed with happy relief. Agnes lay peacefully asleep, her pretty head pillowed on an ivory arm. Without waking her, he dropped beside her and felt again at ease.

Maybe she'd long for the locket, but he'd still be safe on the "outside."

V.

NEXT morning Elegant George Carew stowed Agnes's piping hot griddle cakes below decks with a guilty conscience. She hadn't suspected. Then he wouldn't tell her. He smudged a golden nugget of maple syrup from his chin, picked up his ice tongs, and prepared to begin another day's toil. Agnes came for her kiss.

"By the way, honey," Elegant George asked in the best offhand manner he could command, "what did you ever do with my jimmy and things?"

"I found good use for your jimmy."

"You did? How?"

"I used it last night to open the side window in Blumberg's place. Sort of thought you might drop around there, and I wanted to be on hand to warn you back to the straightforward path, George. Remember, locket or no locket, you're an honest ice man."

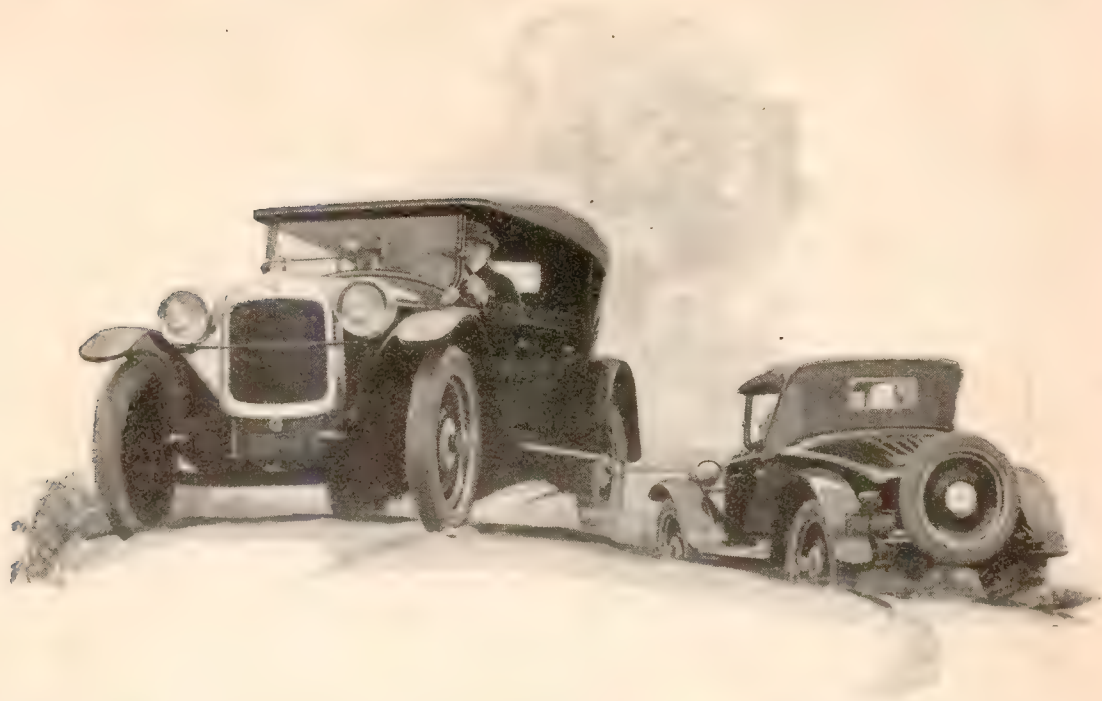


OUT OF THE PAST

THE old-time altars crumble fast,
And drop away;
While o'er the ruins of the past
We rise to-day.

But something from the ages gone
The world retains—
Only was error overthrown;
Truth yet remains!

Eugene C. Dolson.



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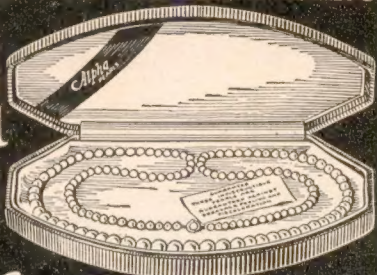
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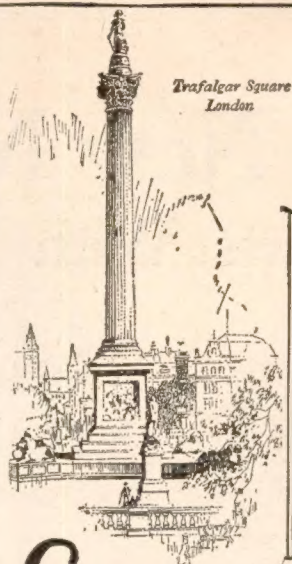
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